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**THE BETRAYAL OF THE  
LEFT**

EDITED BY VICTOR GOLLANCZ: CONTRIBUTORS,  
THE EDITOR, JOHN STRACHEY, GEORGE ORWELL,  
A LABOUR CANDIDATE: PREFACE BY H. J. LASKI

# THE BETRAYAL OF THE LEFT

AN EXAMINATION & REFUTATION OF COMMUNIST POLICY  
FROM OCTOBER 1939 TO JANUARY 1941:  
WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR AN ALTERNATIVE  
AND AN EPILOGUE ON POLITICAL MORALITY

"To stand aside from this conflict, to contribute only  
revolutionary-sounding phrases while the fascist beasts  
ride roughshod over Europe, would be a betrayal of  
everything our forbears have fought to achieve in the  
course of long years of struggle against capitalism."

HARRY POLLITT

*September 1939*

"We cannot even speak of Socialism if we are robbed  
of a country in which to practise it."

MAO TSE-TUNG

*the Chinese Communist leader*

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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

### EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN THE DEAN OF CANTERBURY AND THE EDITOR

*December 13th 1940*

MY DEAR VICTOR,

. . . We rejoice hourly in Italy's plight and our successes.

Yours ever,

HEWLETT JOHNSON.

*January 10th 1941*

MY DEAR HEWLETT,

These many months I have wanted to write to you: but I have always refrained because I have felt that it would seem impertinent.

When you wrote to me how delighted you were by our victory over Italy, I was tempted to break my rule: for you showed clearly that you were on *our* side and not on the Communist Party side, and that made it all the more appalling, from my point of view, that you were lending your name to the Communist Party defeatist activities. But even so I refrained.

Now I am sending you an article on the People's Convention from the current number of the *Tribune*. If you will forgive me for being sentimental for a moment, I have such a regard for your integrity that I simply hate to see you being used for purposes of which I know you totally disapprove.

*You owe it both to yourself, and even more to the people who are influenced by your great name, and by their faith in your complete integrity, to make your own position absolutely clear.*

For: (1) Every politically experienced person understands what the People's Convention really stands for, and therefore (I can assure you that this is so) also thinks that you are a defeatist in the Leninist sense. When I mentioned to someone the other day your remark to me about rejoicing in our victories in Africa, I was simply not believed. (2) A considerable number of people is supporting the Convention without understanding its real meaning and real objects. *People of this sort—not defeatist—are the more encouraged to give their support because they see your name associated with it.*

This is a matter of life and death, my dear Hewlett. I do beg of you to make your position clear.

Yours ever,  
V. G.

29th January 1941

MY DEAR VICTOR,

In reply to your request that I should make my position quite clear, let me say:

(1) I am convinced that Hitler, as the apotheosis of fascism, is enemy No. 1, and must be resisted with all our might. Consistently for years I have urged this resistance; in the case, for instance, of Spain, Austria and Czecho-Slovakia. I have never varied in that opposition. Nor indeed in opposition to fascism in general wherever it appears, at home or abroad. We fight indeed on a double front, against Hitler as fascist enemy No. 1, but also against such fascist tendencies as Mr. Duff Cooper's attempted suppression of the press last June, or Mr. Morrison's achieved suppression of the "Week" and "Daily Worker" at the present moment, without any process of law, thereby violating a fundamental charter of our liberty. The value of criticism was shown in the successful replacement of Mr. Chamberlain by Mr. Churchill as Prime Minister.

(2) I wish to enlist against Hitler, and against any lesser forms of fascism, the whole-hearted and creative energies of the people. It was on this account that I expressed my desire for a People's Government: "only thus", to quote my own words in the "Daily Worker" of December 28th 1940, "can we harness to the full the creative energies and resources of the country against veiled fascism at home and its apotheosis in the Mussolini fascism of Italy and the Hitler-Nazi fascism of Germany".

(3) I regard Mr. Churchill as irreplaceable so long as there is a direct menace of a foreign fascist victory or domination over this country. I worked hard for Mr. Churchill's entrance into the Cabinet and welcomed him wholeheartedly when he was made Premier. Whilst, however, feeling deep gratitude for all he has done as Prime Minister during the war, I am convinced that he is not the man to make the peace. I have no wish for the war to end as in 1918. We want no more Versailles Treaties. We want a People's Peace, which Mr. Churchill as being first and foremost an imperialist is not the best qualified to give us. Above all I want a just peace.

(4) The phrase a People's Government is confessedly vague. Its definition will grow. It might include Churchill, Pollitt, Eden and Pritt. I say 'might' not 'would'—obviously in point of practical politics any such selection would be difficult. I merely state it to illustrate my conviction that at this stage the phrase a People's Government is fluid.

(5) It is precisely because I believe these things and because I equally believe in and ardently long and work for freedom for India, friendship with the Soviet Union, the maintenance of trade union rights and the people's standard of life that I have supported the People's Convention.

Yours ever,

HEWLETT JOHNSON.

*January 31st 1941*

MY DEAR HEWLETT,

I was both relieved and upset to get your letter of the 29th. Relieved, because of what you said in it: upset, because it shows only too clearly how your name is being used for ends of which you disapprove.

For the first month after the outbreak the Communist Party was passionately "pro-war": it advocated "the war on two fronts". You will remember that Harry Pollitt wrote a pamphlet in September 1939 advocating this policy and that, when the Communist Party changed its line and became "anti-war", the pamphlet was withdrawn and Harry Pollitt was made to resign from the secretaryship of the Party and to recant. What your letter says is that you are still in favour of the "war on two fronts" policy (you actually use the phrase "a double front") and that you support the People's Convention because you believe it implements this policy.

But the People's Convention is controlled by the Communist Party: the Communist Party's policy is now the "defeatist" policy of Lenin: following this policy, the Communist leadership is bound to regard not Hitler but Churchill as Enemy No. 1: and by a People's Government they mean something ludicrously different from what you mean. Your policy is anathema to the Communist Party, having been their own policy for the first month of the war.

Yours ever,

V. G.

\* \* \* \* \*

The above letters explain why this book has been put together and published. It is primarily an explanation, and secondarily a refutation, of Communist Party policy from the change of line of October 1939 to the People's Convention of January 1941: with some suggestions for an alternative. Its publication seemed necessary, for the reason that many



people totally misunderstand the aims of communist policy during this period, and therefore give support and add strength to a movement of which, if they understood its meaning and its implications, they would wholly disapprove. Such misunderstanding is not desirable.

It should be said at once that the ultimate motive behind this utterly disastrous policy of the Communist Party is the highest by which men can be inspired: namely, the desire to emancipate humanity from poverty, exploitation, and war. This view of the matter will emerge from a careful reading of the book as a whole.

In the title, the word "betrayal" is, of course, used objectively and not subjectively.

The book consists of a series of "Chapters" and a series of connecting "Notes".

Many of the chapters were originally published in *The Left News*, the organ of the Left Book Club. They are here printed as written, with only the most trifling modifications, though sometimes with additions. The date at the head of each chapter is the date on which it was written.

Chapter I was published as a pamphlet. The correspondence which forms Chapter II was published in *The New Statesman*. Chapters V and VIII, the greater part of Chapter IV, the Epilogue and all the "Notes" are new.

The book has been planned as a connected whole, and is intended to give a continuous survey of Communist Party policy in Great Britain (with some references to Germany, France and Norway) from the outbreak of the war to January 1941.

While it will be clear that there is a broad unanimity between the contributors, and between the contributors and the editor, there are also some differences of opinion. The contributors and the editor are committed only to those statements and views which they individually sign, and the "Notes" commit no one but the editor. The latter has

inserted, in two chapters, a footnote of dissent; but that must not be taken to imply that he agrees with everything else in those chapters.

I wish to thank my friend the Dean of Canterbury for permission to reprint the letters at the beginning of this Foreword; and John Strachey for help with the proofs.

V. G.

*January 31st 1941*

## PREFACE

By HAROLD J. LASKI

**T**H**ERE IS A REAL** sense in which the necessity for the publication of this book is tragic indeed. For many years, the Communist Parties of the world had rendered a supreme service to the working-classes by their insistence that there could be no compromise with Fascism in any shape or form. In this country, particularly, the Communist Party was in the forefront of every effort which sought to expose the folly of appeasement. Its members understood that a peace with Hitler and Mussolini could not be a real peace; and they recognised that the policy of capitulation to the Dictators would, in the end, hazard the very existence of this country. No one demanded more eagerly than they the acceptance of the Nazi-Fascist challenge. No one recognised more profoundly the consequences that would follow from the failure to take it up.

In this book my colleagues of the Left Book Club, and two others, have put on record the history of the argument which has developed as a consequence of the adoption by the Communist Party of Great Britain of that policy of 'revolutionary defeatism' which is sufficiently described in these pages. The results of that adoption cannot be too fully emphasised. It may, I think, be summarised by saying that it has led its supporters to the acceptance of certain positions which, only a month before October, 1939, they would have indignantly repudiated. These positions are:—

1. That the defeat of the Churchill government is a more urgent matter for the British workers than the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini.

2. That if this defeat is followed by a "People's Government" in Britain that government would be able either to make a peace with Hitler and Mussolini or to renew the war against them with the hope of success. In the latter event, the defenders of the Communist line insist, though they produce no evidence to support their position, that Great Britain could count on Soviet support.

3. That the attainment of power by a "People's Government" in Britain would be the signal for action against Hitler by the German people and against Mussolini by the Italian people. A success in Britain is, it appears, to be the signal for that European Revolution which Lenin expected in 1917-18 after the arrival of the Bolsheviki in power.

The weight of argument against each of these views seems to me so heavy, in the light of experience, that it is difficult to believe they can be held by serious students of politics. Nothing has changed in the character either of Nazism or of Fascism since 1933 except the revelation of the intensity of their antagonism to working-class interests. Every people brought under the dominion of either has been ruthlessly exploited, in the case of Poland and Czecho-Slovakia with a barbarism that is literally sickening. A heavy indictment can, no doubt, be made against British imperialism. But it is literally fantastic to argue that its habits even remotely resemble those of its Fascist enemies; and it is pivotal to remember the existence in Great Britain (and the absence in Germany and Italy) of a strong public opinion which is hostile to the excesses of imperialism, as, further, to the imperial idea itself.

I do not myself believe that men like Mr. Pollitt think for one moment that the Churchill government is as bad for the British worker as the Hitler government for the German. That would make nonsense of hundreds of speeches made by him before October, 1939, and of hundreds of articles

written by Stalin's henchmen before the Russo-German Treaty. But the objective consequence of the Communist line is to make this view implicit in their outlook; and it is the assumption which underlies a large part of their argument about the nature of the war.

The Communists themselves insist that a Nazi victory over Britain is no part of their programme; and it is therefore important to follow through the implications of their idea of a "People's Government" which is to secure office through the massed power of the workers' organisations. Certain things are, I think, obvious:—

1. The Churchill government will not be overthrown by the present House of Commons except in consequence of circumstances akin to those which led to the fall of the Chamberlain government. In any case, this House of Commons would not result in a "People's Government" in the Communist sense of the term.

2. Circumstances are conceivable in which a general election in war-time became necessary. The Communist Party and its allies might seek to capture a majority at the polls. But nothing in the war-time by-elections so far suggests that there is the least likelihood of this result.

3. (1) and (2) are the only constitutional means through which a "People's Government" could obtain office; each of them is exceedingly unlikely, to speak the language of moderation. The Communist Party and its allies must therefore expect to attain office by unconstitutional means—i.e. the forcible overthrow of the Churchill government or its successor. If this be the case, it must look for, and, indeed, seek to organise the conditions under which, as Lenin pointed out in 1917, power may be successfully seized. These are:—

1. When the armed forces of the state are disloyal.

2. When the normal machinery of government is in confusion.

3. When there is profound revolutionary class-feeling among the workers as manifested by strikes, riots, demonstrations, etc.

4. When there is a well-organised revolutionary party able to direct that class-feeling into the proper channels.

It may be that the last of these conditions is present in this country; quite certainly, so far, the first three are not; and, if Lenin was right, there is no prospect of a "People's Government", through the massed force of the workers, in their absence. They are likely only to arise either (*a*) after the military defeat of Great Britain, or (*b*) after popular suffering so intense that the desire to end the war on any terms is widespread.

If they arose as a result of military defeat, it seems quite childish to assume that Hitler would permit the "People's Government" to take power. His policy would obviously require some kind of "Vichy Government" in this country prepared for collaboration with him. Its arrival in office could only be prevented, if that were his choice, by the refusal of the Soviet government to permit him to take this view. That would, obviously, be tantamount to a declaration of war on Hitler by Stalin. In the light of the experience of France I see no reason to suppose that Stalin would interfere to prevent the subjugation of Britain by Hitler. If the unlikely event of his doing so occurred, I do not see, in the facts, any evidence to suggest that his interference would come in time to prevent British subjugation.

If Lenin's conditions for successful revolution occurred as a result of a breakdown in British morale, the central problem is that of the terms a "People's Government" would propose to Hitler for peace. The Communist line is that of 1917—no annexations, no indemnities, and national self-

determination. Upon this, it is only necessary, I think, to say three things: (i) it assumes that a completely victorious Hitler will surrender all his conquests; (ii) it forgets that the German response to the similar Russian policy of 1918 was the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk; and (iii) that a "People's Government" offering these terms would, if they were refused, have no alternative but a renewal of the war under far more difficult conditions (including the possibility of domestic civil war) or of complete surrender. It must not be forgotten that what saved the Soviet Union from the consequences of Brest-Litovsk was the Allied victory of 1918. Do the Communists assume that the Soviet Union will play the part of the Allies in 1918? If so, what is the evidence upon which they base that assumption?

We are not, either, told by the Communists why the attainment of power by a "People's Government" will lead to a rising of the German people against Hitler. For (i) they did not rise against his accession to power; (ii) the technique of repression in Germany today has crushed out all organised opposition against the régime; (iii) the November Revolution in Russia did not lead to a rising of the German people against the Hohenzollerns until after their defeat by the Allies. Why a situation which gives Hitler the one chance, in Dr. Ley's words, of making "other peoples sweat for Germany" should cause Germans to revolt against him no Communist has so far made clear. It cannot, in fact, be too often insisted that, historically, St. Helena is the aftermath of Waterloo.

## II

From this analysis, I am bound to conclude that the necessary prelude to the success of the policy urged on the people of this country by the Communist Party is the defeat of Great Britain by Hitler. As I can think of no result more

disastrous to the workers than such a defeat, that policy seems to me to be indefensible in the interest of the workers themselves. I do not maintain that the victory of Great Britain necessarily means a victory for the workers; in the light of the war of 1914-18 it is obviously impossible to do so. I maintain only (i) that the defeat of Great Britain means the destruction of the forces making for working-class democracy in their last stronghold in Europe, and that (ii) the victory of Great Britain offers at least the serious prospect of a victory for those forces all over Europe and especially here.

This is the view of the European situation that the Left Book Club has taken ever since it was founded; and events since 1939 have only confirmed Mr. Gollancz, Mr. Strachey and myself in its correctness.<sup>1</sup> That leaves two other issues on which a word is desirable. The first is the conditions for which the Left should press in order that a victory over Hitlerism may not prove sterile in its results; the second is why the Communist Party has taken a line which seems, as I have sought to show, so clearly to involve a British defeat.

I cannot here deal as fully as is desirable with the first issue. It must be enough to say that, in my judgment, our victory will be thrown away unless, before it comes, the Left has secured the acceptance of a policy of great social reforms. We must secure guarantees against mass-unemployment. We must be sure that the rebuilding of Britain excludes the power of the ground-landlord and the speculative builder to profit from the results of air-bombardment. We must remake our educational and health services with the idea of a full equality of opportunity in view. The vital services, the provision of credit, coal and power, transport and munitions, must be publicly owned and controlled. Unless we are ready for these changes when war ends, we shall not, in my judgment, be in a position to play our part in the making of a peace likely, in any profound way, to deal with the causes

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix V, p. 322.—*Editor*.



of war at their source. With such changes, we could hope for a peaceful transition to a Socialist Britain over a period of years; and the freedom we should win from that hope would give us that leadership in international reconstruction which, on the assumption of our victory, no other nation will be able to attempt.

The second issue is why the British Communist Party has shifted its position from that taken by Mr. Pollitt in September, 1939, when it emphasised the urgency of Hitler's defeat in the field, to that taken since October, 1939, which is, as this book explains, effectively that of revolutionary defeatism.

It is always difficult to explain changes the motives of which are deliberately screened from the public view. My own belief is that the change results from the need to adapt its outlook to the ideological requirements of the Soviet Union. I think the facts show clearly that (i) the result of the Chamberlain-Daladier appeasement policy was to convince Stalin that in no circumstances would Britain and France fight. (ii) He concluded from this conviction that Hitler would turn eastwards and attack the Soviet Union. (iii) Having given up all hope of the Peace Front for which Litvinov worked so nobly for five years, and being assured that, in the event of an attack from Hitler, he would find himself friendless, he made the German-Soviet Pact. So complete a change in outlook had necessarily to be a closely-guarded secret; and it came, therefore, as a shock to the Communist Parties of the world to see Hitler and Stalin in virtual alliance. The measure of that shock can be seen in Mr. Pollitt's pamphlet of September, 1939, which "a Labour candidate" analyses carefully in this book. The change in the Communist line arose, I think, from the need to make Stalin's *volte-face* acceptable. The Communist's first allegiance is to the Soviet Union; it can do no wrong. To make it clear that this was a justifiable change, the war "against

the Fascist beast" of September, had to become the "imperialist" war of October, 1939. Once it was accepted as an "imperialist war", Lenin's revolutionary defeatism became the necessarily consequential policy. That enables the Communist to feel that Stalin is still the leader of the working-class forces of the world; it enables him to be content with the passive rôle of the Soviet Union in a war against Fascism, and it leaves him with the hope that war, as the probable parent of revolution, will give him the opportunity which did not develop in 1918. Mr. Gollancz and Mr. Strachey have explained in the pages which follow why none of us is able to accept that view, and I have no need to add to the arguments they have presented. I will only say that to reject them seems to me to make nonsense of everything Communists have said of Fascism, both in its German and Italian forms, above all since the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations.

I suspect myself that the power Germany has shown since the outbreak of war has reinforced Stalin's conclusion that the Soviet Union's interest made neutrality the part of wisdom for it. It is worth adding that the safety of the Soviet Union depends in great measure upon a British victory. For were we to be defeated no one can, I think, seriously doubt that Hitler would have his day of reckoning with Stalin; and he would, in that event, be a formidable adversary. Even if the Soviet Union were able to withstand his attack (which will be doubtful to any observer save those for whom a Soviet victory is one of the inevitabilities of history) its price would be terribly high; and it is at least doubtful whether the Russian experiment would stand the strain of that price.

But, if we are victorious, our victory would, for most serious observers, remove the main threat to Soviet security. I know that Mr. Palme Dutt has nightmares of an Anglo-American alliance which will lead the capitalist forces to

attack the Soviet Union ; but I suspect that those nightmares are intended as apocalyptic visions for the faithful rather than as a serious contribution to political discussion. For no writer who wishes to be taken seriously can believe that Mr. Churchill will attempt, in concert with Mr. Roosevelt, to do to a powerful Soviet Union after this war what he was unable to do to a weak Soviet Union after the last war ; no one, certainly, ought to know this better than Mr. Pollitt. The Britain that emerges from this war will, on any showing, be a scarred and maimed Britain ; it is grim evidence of the utter inability of Communists to read the temper of its people to believe that Mr. Churchill, or anyone else, could lead them into an operation of this magnitude. Mr. Dutt can only put forward arguments so unreal because, having accepted fantastic assumptions about the nature of this war, he is relentlessly compelled to be the prime victim of that logic which, as Mr. Chesterton once said, has the power to drive its exponents mad.

I can well understand why the politics of the "appeasement" era led Stalin to the conclusions he then formed. The price the world has paid for them is heavy ; for it is at least doubtful whether, without the German-Soviet Pact, his General Staff would have permitted Hitler to embark upon his gamble for world-power. However that be, I venture the prediction that to no one will his fall be so great a relief as it will be to the Kremlin. The end of Fascism is the beginning of Soviet security, and the beginning of Soviet security may, at long last, prepare the conditions for the evolution of democratic government in the Soviet Union. That is not the least reason why a Socialist must work and hope for a British victory.



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NOTE I

*THE OUTBREAK OF WAR AND THE  
CHANGE OF "LINE"*

BRITAIN AND FRANCE declared war on Germany on September 3rd, 1939. The previous day, the Communist Party of Great Britain had issued a Manifesto in enthusiastic "support" of the war, stressing the necessity of "the military victory over Fascism". Harry Pollitt, who was at that time General Secretary and acknowledged leader of the C.P., wrote a pamphlet passionate in its eloquence and determination. "The Communist Party supports the war", he said, "believing it to be a just war which should be supported by the whole working class and all friends of democracy in Britain. . . . To stand aside from this conflict, to contribute only revolutionary-sounding phrases while the Fascist beasts ride roughshod over Europe, would be a betrayal of everything our forbears have fought to achieve in the course of long years of struggle against capitalism. The Polish people have had no choice. War has been thrust on them. They have had to fight to defend themselves from a foreign attack whose only purpose is to enslave them to Nazi Germany. The experiences of Austria and Czechoslovakia show what the German conquest of their country would mean. . . . If Hitler is allowed to impose his domination on Poland, the people will be forced to accept conditions infinitely worse than anything they have yet suffered. The Nazi Party and the Gestapo will outlaw every atom of working-class organisation; tens of thousands will be murdered or sent to concentration camps; hundreds of thousands will be exiled to forced labour in Germany; crushing taxation will be imposed to strengthen the German

war machine in its next act of aggression; and the whole fight of the Polish people for better conditions will be thrown back until Nazi rule is finally shaken off. . . . Therefore, just as the Abyssinians were right to fight against the Italian invaders, and just as the Spanish people were right to fight against the Italian and German invaders, so also the Polish people are right to fight against the Nazi invasion that is now taking place. . . . This is the actual situation, and whatever the motive of the present rulers of Britain and France, the action taken by them—under considerable pressure from their own peoples—is not only helping the Polish people's fight, but is actually, for the first time, challenging the Nazi aggression which has brought Europe into crisis after crisis for the last three years."

This "support" of the war was the logical corollary of four years' ceaseless campaigning for resistance to Hitler—years during which Communists had denounced as "leftists" or "Trotskyists" all who had alleged that any war which might result from "standing up to Hitler" would inevitably be, in view of the balance of class forces in the various countries, not an anti-Fascist but an imperialist war. These were the years when non-Communists were glad to co-operate with Communists for common ends; for they were happy to acknowledge that for vigour, enthusiasm and self-dedication the Communists were without rivals.

Within a few weeks Poland had been conquered; Germany and the Soviet Union had jointly proposed to the Allies that they should accept the *fait accompli* and make peace; the Communist Party had announced its previous "line" to have been an error, and had declared the war to be, not anti-Fascist, but imperialist; and Harry Pollitt had publicly recanted.

CHAPTER I

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

(FROM THE CHANGE OF "LINE" TO THE INVASION OF  
SCANDINAVIA)

*An Open Letter to Communists*

By VICTOR GOLLANZ

*May 3rd, 1940*

I ADDRESS THIS APPEAL, with the utmost earnestness of which I am capable, not to those of an I.L.P. or pacifist tendency (for their attitude, though I entirely disagree with it, is quite different from that with which I wish to deal) but to those rank and file members of the Communist Party with whom I worked so closely in Popular Front days, when, however great the difference between their philosophy of life and mine which progressively revealed itself, so many of our immediate practical objectives (and not only these) were, or seemed to be, identical.

\* \* \* \* \*

First of all, forget the atmosphere in which you have been living since September: forget how, by a little increase of emphasis every day on one aspect, and a little decrease of emphasis on another, your mental climate is now, in the eighth month of the war, something totally different from what it then was: and remember what you were saying and thinking about Hitler-Fascist aggression, and what you were rapturously applauding, any time from 1933 to September 1939.

Will you pause for a little time before you read further, and think yourself back into those days?

\* \* \* \* \*

You regarded Hitler-Fascist aggression, did you not, as a deadly menace, as *the* deadly menace, to everything in which we believe, and to every hope of further progress and advance? You listened attentively when we gave a careful description of the appalling conditions of the German working class and of the system of industrial slavery which was being progressively introduced: you were horrified at the tortures in the concentration camps: you loathed Hitler's ideological repudiation of liberty, objectivity, mercy, pity and kindness, and his glorification of force and submission to force. If you find it difficult to remember, here is a description:

“The Fascist obscurantists who rule in Germany today, or to be more precise, who wage war upon the German nation, detest all humanist traditions. The hangmen of the Inquisition, the torturers of the Middle Ages who burned men at the stake in the dark age of superstition and savagery, are the ancestors of the German Fascists. But the terror of Hitler outdoes in crudity, bestiality and infamy, those bloodhounds of Mediæval Germany. It outvies the most fanatical geniuses for pogrom under Russian Tsarism. It has worked brutishness up into a system which makes the terror of that Inquisition seem tame. Never yet has Germany been so terribly disgraced, and never yet have Europe or the world witnessed any slaughter of innocents carried out with such design, deliberation and sangfroid.”

It is from the *Communist International* of January 1939.

So you demanded, week after week, that the Government—yes, the Government—should “make a stand” against Hitler aggression, for you felt, not only that as he conquered one country after another more and more of the general total of decency and liberty and hope of progress was being

extinguished, but that, if this went on, there would be the danger, indeed the certainty, that our turn would come.

The policy that you and I advocated was, of course, primarily designed to *prevent* the outbreak of war (albeit a tiny minority of you—and those I always uncompromisingly opposed—in your hearts, as could be judged from your conversation, unquestionably *wanted* war against Hitler): but there was never the smallest suggestion that *if* a stand against Hitler resulted in war, we would then shirk the issue. On the contrary, you agreed with *Inprecorr* of October 8th, 1938, that “a peace based on continuous capitulation to the Fascist aggressors is a defeat”. If there was anyone who, it was anticipated, might flinch, it was I rather than you—I who was so often accused of “pacifist deviations”.

Nor was there the slightest suggestion, either that we should “give way” to Hitler if the U.S.S.R. was not by our side, or that we should refuse to fight behind the Tories. On the contrary, the cry “Chamberlain must go” was above all based precisely on the belief that Chamberlain would *not* stand up to Hitler: and something more than a shy glance was turned, now towards Eden, now towards Winston Churchill, now towards Duff Cooper, precisely in the belief that they *would*. Indeed, as time went on it was to the Tories that your appeal (rather than mine) was more and more directly made. I was always of the opinion, and expressed it, that things were going altogether too far in that direction: I remember a heated discussion about a leaflet in the later stages of the Spanish conflict, when you successfully urged, to my dismay, that the whole appeal should be based on British imperialist interests.

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Remember all that, then, and ask yourselves—freeing your minds from everything you have been thinking since September—weren't we right in everything we said and thought during those Popular Front days? And if aggressive

Hitlerism was such a deadly menace before the outbreak of the war, is it less of a menace now? The Communist Press, for reasons which will appear, has given little, and progressively less, publicity to Nazi atrocities since September: and you must not accuse me of atrocity-mongering for saying this, for you yourselves used to take the lead, and rightly, in exposing these atrocities. But if you read other papers, you will know what has been done to your Polish brothers and sisters—not to capitalists and landlords, though they are human beings too, but to men and women of the working class; and if you saw the *Daily Telegraph* of April 16th and 17th, you must have felt in the living presence of an even greater obscenity. For, as a triumph of reporting in that paper made clear, the capital city of Norway surrendered without a blow to no more than 1,500 German troops—because for years Hitler's Fifth Column had been engaged in gaining possession of all the key positions. Amusing the people, who had no conception of what was happening: with gay concerts, in this café and on that square: a tiny handful of men was able in a few hours to bring Oslo under alien domination—and not just under alien domination (though any alien domination is a foul thing) but under Nazi domination, the character of which you understood so well a year ago. And any of you who did read those issues of the *Daily Telegraph* may have recalled Elwyn Jones' book *The Battle for Peace*, which was the Left Book Club Choice in August 1938, and in which, taking country after country, he warned us how these Trojan-horse tactics were being prepared.

\* \* \* \* \*

As you know, all the national Communist Parties took up, about a month after the outbreak of hostilities, the "defeatist" position of Lenin. That position, as I understand it, is as follows. This is an imperialist war: in an imperialist war "the enemy is in your own country": from the point of view

of the working class there is nothing to choose between rival ruling classes: and therefore the working class in each country has the sole duty of attacking *its own* ruling class in order to end the war by the defeat of all ruling classes, and by an international Socialist revolution. This is the position which has been consistently held by the I.L.P.: they maintained it, before the war, against us "Popular Frontists" with our cry for a stand against Hitler, and they have maintained it without deviation from the day war was declared to the present.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is not with this position that I wish to deal; but let me say just a word about it. Or rather, let me put to you the question which, week after week, I have been putting to Communist friends. "Suppose the resistance of this country were successfully undermined: suppose civilians refused to make munitions, sailors to sail, airmen to defend us from enemy bombers: what then? <sup>1</sup> I think you will reply that the effect *might* be to produce a similarly successful result in Germany, and thus to stop the war by international working-class action, with world socialism as the outcome. I do not myself believe that this result in Germany even *might conceivably* follow: I believe you are thinking in terms of barricades, which are obsolete, rather than of machine-guns and bombing aeroplanes, and are failing to realise the effect of another new factor—totalitarian methods of propaganda and control. Disaffection in Great Britain and France, the sabotaging of our war effort, and all the rest, would, as it emerged at the other end of Dr. Goebbels' machine, *represent itself* to the overwhelming mass of the German people

<sup>1</sup> It is not suggested for a moment that the British Communist Party advocates *individual* acts of sabotage—such as putting sand in machines. But it is fantastic to imagine that you could succeed in persuading large masses of British people that we are waging an unjust war, that we must therefore bend all our energies to "stop" it, and that it is the enemy *at home* that we must above all fight, without weakening our resistance to the enemy abroad. If a man comes to believe that not Hitler but Chamberlain is the main enemy, why on earth should he risk his life or work his hardest to defeat Hitler?

simply as a weakening of civilian morale, and as the first signs that the British and French peoples were beginning to turn against their own plutocrats and so to *co-operate* with the "socialist" Hitler. For that is the whole line of his lying propaganda. The result would be a strengthening, not a weakening, of the Nazi régime.

"And if, contrariwise, your struggle against the war here *did* begin seriously to strengthen the revolutionary movement in Germany, remember the immense and awful power of the Gestapo, with its spy in every home, to stamp out the first serious flicker. In such conditions, mustn't it be a very long process for a revolt in Germany to come to maturity, except in the circumstance of a military defeat? You forget the time factor, and the ruthless speed with which Hitler moves. Even on the most favourable assumption, if you seriously succeeded by your propaganda *here* in smashing our power to resist him, Hitler would have conquered us before he had been seriously weakened in Germany.

"But suppose, for a moment, you are right: suppose, that is to say, that your tactics might conceivably result in a German revolution before Hitler had either conquered us or compelled us to accept a peace which would be the prelude to conquest. Isn't there an enormous gulf between those words '*might conceivably*' (you *can't* put it higher than that) and the word '*must*'? I mean, you cannot pretend for a moment that the result at which you aim *must* follow. Isn't, then, your gamble an appalling one? For what if the result *didn't* follow? Everything we know of the Hitler régime proves that he would at once intensify his totalitarian attack on us: and if our resistance had been sufficiently undermined he would win. And the result? *Quite literally* (I repeat *quite literally*—this is a thing you simply have to face, and face now) the immediate destruction of the British working-class movement: the use of every device by the Nazi dictatorship to render that destruction permanent: concentration camps



all over England: the burning of the books: the 'education' of our children in the shameful doctrines of blood and soil, of cruelty and violence: the banning of Mill and Marx and Freud: effective measures to prevent the emergence of any thinkers who might confer even greater benefits on mankind than Mill and Marx and Freud: in a word, the destruction not only of the free intelligence but of the spirit of mankind, and a reversal of the whole gradual movement of humanity towards physical, intellectual and spiritual emancipation. And once all this had happened, it would be too late for you to cry out; for the simple reason that you would be shot if you tried to. You sometimes say: 'Stop this imperialist war, which confers no benefits on the workers.' Whoever thought it *did* confer benefits on the workers? But the victory of Hitler would 'confer' penalties on the workers which one simply dare not contemplate. In repeating the slogans of 1914-1918, you forget an altogether new factor: that the very essence of fascism is the imposition of *its own régime* on conquered peoples, and its power, at least over a long period, to make that régime permanent, and to prevent any struggle against it, by means of totalitarian technique. When Germany conquered France in 1871, she did not *incorporate* France in Germany and impose on it her own system of government and way of life: when the Allied and Associated Powers conquered Germany in 1918 they did not 'take over' Germany and impose on her *their* system of government and way of life. But Germany *has* incorporated Austria and Czechoslovakia and Poland: if she conquered Great Britain she would incorporate *us* (make no mistake about it) and impose a Fascist régime upon us also. And looking at the matter merely from the narrow point of view of *British* working-class interests—not but that an international Socialist should have a broader vision—you cannot believe that it is a matter of indifference whether you live under Hitlerism, which, apart from its other unutterable vilenesses,

closes the door to Socialist struggle, or under our Western capitalism, which, immeasurably better as it is in other ways also, leaves that door open.

“There is nothing more important in the world than to stir up the German people against Hitler: and the recent turn in Government propaganda—‘It is the German people we are fighting’—is not only wicked, but must have the disastrous result of uniting them still more firmly behind him. But we dare not, by sabotaging our war effort in the hope of encouraging the Germans to sabotage theirs, present Hitler with something like the *certainty* of victory. We should, on the contrary, strengthen our resistance: we should be mobilising all our human, material and financial resources far more completely and single-mindedly than at present, the very maximum burden being put upon the rich: but while doing so we should ceaselessly watch the changing movement of international events in the determination to seize *any* opportunity which might lead to a real people’s peace, and should be saying to the German people—and *meaning*—something like this, and saying it every minute of the day and with all the means at our command: ‘Our major peace aim, in the light of which everything else will fall into place, is the co-operative restoration of Europe, and a planned effort, not merely European but international, to increase the purchasing power of all the common people of the world, so that at last there may be that universal plenty and security which are at present denied to millions, but which science makes possible for all. In that effort, you, the German people, with your industry and efficiency, must play a major, perhaps *the* major, part. But all this is impossible so long as Hitler’s power to dominate and enslave is unbroken.’

“You will say, and rightly so: ‘Is it possible, is it conceivable, that the present Government would ever say anything like that?’ No, it is not: and that is why it is vital

that we should get a new Government. Life and politics are unfortunately not very simple things: and progressives are, as they always knew they would be if war came, in a desperate dilemma. But while the *next worst thing* to a Hitler victory is the waging of the war (and, God forbid, the making of the peace) by the National Government, the *worst thing of all*, the ultimate disaster, death to all working-class hopes and possibilities, would be a Hitler victory. We must struggle with all our might to prevent *both* evils: but we must not, by the manner of our struggle against *the worst thing but one*, bring upon ourselves *the worst thing of all.*"<sup>1</sup>

I have tried to give myself a satisfactory answer to this argument: I have read the contemporary literature, and thought the thing out for myself; but I have failed. And I have also failed to get a single satisfactory answer from the numerous Communist friends with whom I have discussed the question.

One brilliant young friend could find nothing to say but "I believe you are enormously over-estimating the military strength of Germany: actual victory by Hitler is really very improbable." He at once gave me my case, for he implied that he would agree with me if he believed in the possibility of a Hitler victory! Of course a Hitler victory is improbable—and it must be made impossible—if our resistance is based on an understanding of what is at stake; but it is not in the least improbable if that resistance is weakened. And this was a man who spoke with me at numerous meetings during the eighteen months before the war, and then had such a high opinion of the military strength of Germany that he always commented with the utmost enthusiasm on speeches in which, pleading for an Anglo-Soviet-French peace-bloc, I tried to show how difficult our military position would be vis-à-vis Germany, unless we had Russia,

<sup>1</sup> [Footnote added January 1941.] This paragraph was published in May, under the Chamberlain régime.

not merely benevolently neutral, but actively on our side. I wonder if he *still* thinks that a Hitler victory is "very improbable"?

Most of the others to whom I have put the question have said "It is a mistake to look too far ahead, and to consider this or that hypothetical consequence: British capitalism may be, yet, less bad than German fascism: but ultimately what is at the root of this war is imperialist rivalry, and our duty is to end imperialism everywhere by attacking it in the only place we can—in our own country. We cannot look farther ahead than that: we must just see what happens."

When you remember what is at stake—read again the manifesto in the *Communist International* which I have already quoted—isn't that rather an "easy", irresponsible attitude?

And not only is there no attempt to think out in a calm and logical way the probable consequences of this policy, but one can get no clear answer to the question, What precisely, in terms of action *now*, does the cry "Stop the war *now*" mean? In the *Daily Worker* of April 25th an attempt was made to reply to this query by a reader: "Would the C.P. support an immediate negotiated peace between the Governments of Britain, France and Germany, as at present constituted?" The writer could find nothing more convincing to say than "This is one of the many questions which cannot be answered by a simple 'Yea, yea' or 'nay, nay'", followed by a column of painfully confused evasions.<sup>1</sup>

The name of Lenin is frequently invoked to justify the "defeatist" policy in the present war. A leading article in the *Daily Worker* of April 26th, for instance, tells us "In reply to those who said 'fight for the Russian capitalists because otherwise you will fall under the heel of the German capitalists' Lenin said: 'The alternative is false, choose

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III.

neither, but unite your forces and establish the power of the people.' That was over twenty-two years ago." Indeed it was: could there be anything more mechanical, more "undialectical", than to take a statement made in one set of circumstances, and to apply it to quite another, as if over twenty-two years of history, which include the rise of Fascism, made no difference? And as a matter of fact Lenin can be quoted in the directly opposite sense. He wrote "This proposition is especially true in relation to Russia. The victory of Russia will bring with it a strengthening of world reaction, a strengthening of the reaction inside of the country, and will be accompanied by a complete enslavement of the peoples in the regions already seized. In view of this, the defeat of Russia appears to be the lesser evil under all conditions." <sup>1</sup> The rôle played by Russia then is played by Hitler-Germany today.

And if what Lenin said about one war is to be used as a guide for action in another, why stop at Lenin? One might recall that Marx, a German, supported Germany in the Franco-Prussian War, and might go on to cite the letter to Engels of August 15th, 1870.<sup>2</sup> Here are some passages from it: I have put in square brackets the names and expressions which would make it applicable to today.

"Germany [Great Britain and France] has been driven by Badinguet <sup>3</sup> [Hitler] into a war for her national existence. If Badinguet [Hitler] defeats her [Britain], Bonapartism [Hitlerism] will be strengthened for years to come and Germany [Britain] broken for years, perhaps for generations. In that case there can be no more question of an independent German [British] working-class movement either. . . . If Germany [Britain] wins, French Bonapartism [German

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works of Lenin*, Vol. XVIII, "The Imperialist War", p. 149. London, Martin Lawrence, Ltd. (n.d.).

<sup>2</sup> Marx and Engels: *Selected Correspondence*, p. 295. Martin Lawrence, Ltd., London, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Napoleon III.

fascism] will at any rate be smashed . . . and the French [German] workers, whatever sort of Government may succeed this one, are certain to have a freer field than under Bonapartism [Hitlerism]. . . . That in these circumstances a German [British] political party should preach total obstruction . . . and place all sorts of secondary considerations before the main consideration, seems to me impossible. Added to this is the fact that Badinguet [Hitler] would never have been able to conduct this war without the chauvinism of the mass of the French [German] population. . . . Until this chauvinism is knocked on the head, and that properly, peace between Germany [Britain] and France [Germany] is impossible. . . . Now come the secondary considerations. For the fact that this war was ordered by Lehmann,<sup>1</sup> Bismarck & Co. [Chamberlain, Simon & Co.] and must minister to their temporary glorification if they conduct it successfully, we have to thank the miserable state of the German bourgeoisie [our failure to achieve the Popular Front]. It is certainly very unpleasant, but cannot be altered. But to magnify Anti-Bismarckism [anti-Chamberlainism] into the sole guiding principle on this account would be absurd. In the first place, Bismarck [Chamberlain] . . . is at present doing a bit of our work for us, in *his own* way and without meaning to. . . . He is clearing the ground for us better than before. In general to try . . . to set the clock back on all that has happened since 1866 [1933] is senseless. But we know our model South Germans [ ? ? ? ]. There is nothing to be done with these fools.”

But, as I said, I do not wish to deal, except in that passing and very casual fashion, with the difficulties inherent in the straight “defeatist” position, the position of those who

<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm I.

say "In every one of the warring countries the enemy is at home: and the working class in each country has only one duty—to attack 'its own' bourgeoisie."<sup>1</sup> Rather do I want now to come to the whole purpose of this letter, and to put the following question to you. *Do you realise (I am certain that many of you do not) that from a "defeatist" position of the kind just described some of the propaganda of the various Communist Parties now gives an unmistakably pro-Nazi impression? Worse, that the differing tactics of the various Communist Parties must, in their joint effect and if these tactics continue, tend, even more than would the following of "defeatist" tactics in each belligerent country, to increase the probability of a Hitler victory?*

I hate to write that sentence: I know only too well the risk I run of its being quoted by every red-baiting and refugee-harrying reactionary, whose attacks on you are wholly suspect, in view of their own *subjectively* pro-Nazi record. Indeed, the possibility that anything I might write would be used in this way made me hesitate and hesitate again before publishing this letter. But I cannot escape the feeling that, as I said what I thought in the old days, I have the responsibility to say what I think today.

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But I *must* immediately add a sentence qualifying the one just printed in italics, and I hope that, if the first is quoted, the second will be quoted with it.

I do *not* mean that the Communist Parties are beginning to become pro-Nazi, in the sense that they are beginning to *like* Nazism. On the contrary, I am quite certain that, when you directly think about it, the overwhelming majority of you detest fascism, and in particular Hitler-fascism—though your whole shift of emphasis these last few months means that you no longer live, as you used to live, and still ought to live, in the daily and hourly realisation of its

<sup>1</sup> [Footnote added January 1941.] The defeatist position is described and refuted in detail in Chapter IV.

supreme horror. And surely if, in view of this shiftage of emphasis for tactical reasons, you think more and more every day about the evils of Western capitalist democracy, and less and less about those of Hitler-fascism, there is a *danger* that you may eventually find yourself, almost without knowing it, in a subjectively pro-Nazi position. It is our old friend "Quantity changing into Quality". I do not attach much importance, *except* as a danger signal, to aberrations of some odd individuals here or there. A friend whom I can trust told me the other day that a young Communist had said to him "I have just been reading *Mein Kampf*: of course I don't agree with it all, but really a lot of it's awfully sound", and that another had said "All this talk about Czech independence! Hitler's perfectly right in saying . . .". I myself have had a few letters from Communists suggesting that Hitler-fascism was "relatively progressive"<sup>1</sup> as compared with capitalist democracy. Far from being representative, I am sure that such opinion is, at present at least, numerically negligible: but it is a danger signal, and against this danger I beg you to be on your guard.

Nor do I mean that you *want* a Hitler victory. What I mean is this: your particular relation to the Soviet Union inevitably *involves* propaganda which gives a pro-Nazi impression<sup>2</sup> and has led the various Communist Parties, taken together, into actions which, I repeat, must inevitably increase the possibility of a Hitler victory, even more than would the adherence by Communists, in *each* belligerent

<sup>1</sup> Of course, Germany is further on the road to collectivism than we, and the future lies with collectivism. But the German collectivism is not a progressive collectivism: it is the collectivism of a slave state.

<sup>2</sup> [Footnote added January 1941.] This was only half the truth, *so far as the British C.P. was concerned*: it was also the developing logic of the defeatist campaign which almost inevitably involved pro-Nazi propaganda. After the *volte-face* from its "pro-war" position, the C.P. took a little time to get fully into its defeatist stride. For a very short period it tended to attack impartially both the "rival imperialisms": then it turned more and more of its guns—until by February 1st it was turning *all* its guns—on "its own" imperialism. And quite apart from the Soviet complication, it is very difficult to concentrate on blackening one side without whitewashing the other.



country, to the straight "defeatist" position—"concentrate your attack on 'your own' Government".

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As I said, I am sure that many of you do not realise this present tendency. If you are one of those who do not, please don't cry out in angry denial before you have considered the following evidence. I take it from three countries—Germany, France and Great Britain: and the evidence from all three must be considered together, for you know as well as I do that Communist Party policy, in all countries, is a co-ordinated whole.

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*Germany.* Walter Ulbricht, a member of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party, published an article in *Die Welt* (an official C.P. paper) of February 2nd, in which the following sentence occurs:

"This war policy [namely, support of the Allies] is the more criminal because . . . [Great Britain] . . . *is the most reactionary force in the world.*" [Italics in original.]

Not more than one week before the conclusion of the Russo-German Pact, the Moscow Radio broadcast the following sentence from an article by the same Ulbricht:

"It is absolutely essential to fight Hitlerism by all means at our disposal. Therefore the French and Polish people in common must put up a gallant stand against German aggression."

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The words italicised above are amply sufficient for my purpose. Even if they stood alone, they would be quite conclusive. But they do not stand alone. Let us examine the whole article closely.

It appeared, not only in *Die Welt* of February 2nd, but also in *World News & Views*<sup>1</sup> of February 17th. And here a

<sup>1</sup> The English version of an international Communist paper.

startling fact must be noted—or rather a fact that will startle those still capable of being startled. *Several passages—several of what can only be called the worst passages—are omitted from the version printed in “World News & Views”*. In particular, the whole passage which contains the words “That power [Great Britain] is the most reactionary force in the world”—words italicised in *Die Welt*—is omitted. I can only hazard the guess that between February 2nd and February 17th someone realised what effect was likely to be produced in Britain by the passages subsequently omitted from the English version.

Now this is what the whole long article comes to:

(1) It *consistently and repeatedly* presents British imperialism as the enemy of enemies.

(2) There is the implication that, apart from all other respects in which British imperialism is “more reactionary” than Germany imperialism, the economic system of Western democracy is more oppressive to the workers than German fascism. Not only are we told (immediately below the “most reactionary” sentence) that “The British answer [to the German peace proposal after the conquest of Poland] was to lead the offensive against the workers”: we also read “When the middle-class papers declare in one article that Britain is fighting for freedom, and report in another article in the same paper the arrest of fighters for freedom, the muzzling of the workers’ Press, the establishment of concentration camps and special laws against the workers, then the German workers have the proof before their eyes that the ruling class in Britain is carrying on the war against the working class, and that, *if Germany were conquered* [my italics], the German working class would be treated in the same way. The German workers know the big business men of England and the two hundred families of France, and are aware what an English victory would mean to them”.

The lie about conditions in Britain is altogether shameful;

but that is not for the moment the main point. Turn back to page 12, and read again what the *Daily Worker* said on April 26th: "In reply to those who said 'fight for the Russian capitalists because otherwise you will fall under the heel of the German capitalists' Lenin said: 'The alternative is false, choose neither, but unite your forces and establish the power of the people'". Read also the following words, in which he explained that it was *particularly* important for a Russian not to use the argument about the dangers of conquest by German capitalists, because, in view of the *specially* reactionary character of the Russian régime, "the defeat of Russia appears to be the lesser evil under all conditions". And now Ulbricht actually seeks to frighten the German workers with what would happen to them "if Germany were conquered" by British and French capitalism: while, if we point out what would happen to British workers if Britain were conquered by German fascism, we are described as reactionaries and war-mongers. This is Lenin standing on his head.

(3) Next after British imperialism as the real enemies come "Hilferding and the one-time Social-Democratic leaders" and "the Thyssen clique and their friends (sic) among the Social-Democratic and Catholic leaders"—in fact, all who are striving, from their various motives, to bring down the Hitler régime, but oppose the German-Soviet Pact. Ulbricht writes:

"If Hilferding and the other one-time Social-Democratic leaders direct their war propaganda against the German-Soviet Pact, it is simply *because the British plan has the less chance of success, the more deeply the friendship between the German and Soviet people is rooted in the working masses* [italics in original]. Therefore not only the Communists but also many Social-Democratic and *National-Socialist* [my italics] workers regard it as their task *not in any circumstances to*

*permit a breach of the Pact.* [Double emphasis in original.] Those who intrigue against the friendship of the German and Soviet people are enemies of the German people, and are branded as accomplices of British Imperialism. Among the German working class greater and greater efforts are being made to *expose* [italics in original] the followers of the Thyssen clique, who are the enemies of the German-Soviet pact. *There have been many demands that these enemies shall be removed from their Army and Government positions, and that their property shall be confiscated.* [Italics in original.]

“The fight of the German working people against the agents of British Imperialism, against the Thyssen clique and their friends among the Social-Democratic and Catholic leaders in Germany . . .”

I will not say that Ulbricht, in this carefully phrased passage, goes so far as to incite “the German working class” (including “National Socialists”) to denounce Social-Democratic and Catholic oppositional elements to the Hitler régime; but I do say that he clearly regards their “exposure” to the régime with approval. And, to make this more palatable, Social-Democratic and Catholic fighters against the régime are, if they oppose the German-Soviet Pact, called “friends” and “followers” of the “Thyssen clique”.

(4) The denunciation of the régime is not on a scale that might even *balance* the attack on British imperialism, German Social-Democrats and German Catholics. Such criticism as is to be found is subordinated to the main attack: it is incidental or parenthetical: indeed it is chiefly used to *point* the main attack—as in the sentence “It is true that by annexing Austria and Czechoslovakia German imperialism proved its aggressiveness. But this only goes to prove that the ruling circles in England . . .” With the possible exception of the word “terror” in the sentence “The

revolutionary workers who . . . are fighting against the terror and against reaction” and in three other similar sentences, the criticism is no stronger than that made every day of our own Government by many “pro-war” Socialists here, and considerably less strong than that made of Mr. Chamberlain by me in the course of this very letter. You have only to read any Manifesto of the British Communist Party since their change to the “anti-war” line (or indeed before it) to appreciate the startling difference between their attitude to “their” Government and Ulbricht’s attitude to “his”.

Or one may put it like this. Ulbricht attacks the Nazi régime and British imperialism respectively in much the same way as that in which the *Daily Worker* (as we shall see) attacks the Nazi régime and British imperialism respectively, and with much the same balance. The article might well have been written by a British Communist, concentrating his fire on “his own” (the *British*) bourgeoisie, rather than by a German Communist, who should (in defeatist theory), but does not, concentrate on *his*, on the *German*, régime.

(5) There is *no* appeal—not a trace of it—to the German people to rise up and *overthrow* the régime by revolutionary action (and lest it should be thought that this may be due to difficulties of publication, it must be remembered that *Die Welt* is published in Sweden). Here is a typical passage: “The fight of the German working people against the agents of British Imperialism, against the Thyssen clique and their friends among the Social-Democratic and Catholic leaders in Germany, in no way implies the formation of a bloc with the National-Socialist régime and toleration of the oppression of Austria and Czechoslovakia. On the contrary, this attitude demands a still more determined fight against all imperialistic strivings of the ruling circles in Germany. This imperialist policy finds its expression above all in the national oppression of the Austrian, Czech, Slovak and Polish people. Whereas the one-time Social-Democratic leaders do not give

the slightest support to the fight of the nationally oppressed peoples, the Communists, and all progressive forces in Germany, are fighting *for full right of self-determination of these peoples. An energetic waging of this fight is a fundamental condition of the fight for peace and for the rights of the working people in Germany itself* [italics in original]. National oppression in so-called 'Great Germany' is only grist to the mill of British Imperialism. . . . The fact that the Czech people are so oppressed makes it difficult for them to realise that British Imperialism, and its accomplices in Czechoslovakia, have no other aim but to make the country a protectorate of Britain, in order to use it as a base from which to attack the Soviet Union. If they were not so oppressed the mass of the people in Austria and Czechoslovakia would fight with greater resolution to resist the British plan."

There are several points of the greatest interest in this passage:

(a) Note that Ulbricht demands here a fight "*against all imperialist strivings of the ruling circles in Germany*", not "*against the ruling circles of Germany*". And is there anything in this even as strong as the attacks by us "pro-war" Socialists on "any imperialistic strivings of the Chamberlain Government"? And don't we say—and mean—that a fundamental condition of our struggle against aggression is an energetic waging of the fight for the self-determination of, for instance, India?

(b) What Ulbricht is really saying here to the Hitler Government, with an air of slightly pained remonstrance, is this: "Don't play into the hands of British Imperialism, which is the real enemy, by oppressing Austria and Czechoslovakia, by 'imperialistic strivings', and by reactionary methods at home."

(c) The words "in no way implies a bloc with the Nazi régime" have been cited to prove that Ulbricht is, after all, in the true line of descent from Liebknecht. In fact they

prove the opposite. *Qui s'excuse, s'accuse*. Imagine Liebknecht having to justify something or other that he advocated by adding that it "was not to be taken as implying a bloc with the Kaiser"!

(6) I have just called attention to the use of the words "all imperialist strivings of the ruling circles of Germany" rather than "the ruling circles of Germany". It is difficult not to see here and elsewhere in the article a preparation for "working in", if necessary, with the present *pseudo*-Socialist propaganda of the Nazi bureaucracy. As I write (April 27th) Dr. Ley, Leader of the German Labour Front, is reported to have just said "The greatest task . . . is the utter destruction of the Western Plutocracy. . . . Their armies will be routed, and world capitalism will be destroyed."

(7) In the major immediate issues of international policy, as between the Allies, Germany, and the Soviet Union, Ulbricht's line coincides with that of Hitler. As we have just seen, he attacks Britain for not having accepted Hitler's "peace offer" after the conquest of Poland.

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In order that you may judge for yourselves, I have reproduced the article in full as Appendix I. Read it, I beg you, with the utmost care: make due allowance for the fact that it is a polemic against Hilferding, of whom (as of the Allies) it contains much, in my opinion, well-merited criticism: give full weight to some excellent passages of Marxist analysis: and then ask yourselves whether, for all its brilliantly clever phrasing, its practical effect is not, beyond any possibility of doubt, to strengthen Hitler's hand? And inevitably. It is the defence of the German-Soviet Pact which is above all important for Ulbricht: to that everything else is subordinated: and, lest there should be any mistake about this, he emphasises the words "not in any circumstances to permit a breach of the Pact" not merely by italics, but also by spacing the letters. But the defence of the German-Soviet Pact is

also above all important for Hitler. How then could Ulbricht conceivably regard Hitler as "the main enemy" or wage a revolutionary struggle against him?

\* \* \* \* \*

At the risk of being wearisome, I want to state once again the classical "defeatist" case. It is this. The enemy is in your own country: from the point of view of the working class there is nothing to choose between rival ruling classes: the working class in *each* country has therefore one sole duty, namely to attack *its own* ruling class, in order to end the war by the defeat of all ruling classes and by an international Socialist revolution.

Does Ulbricht tell the German Communists that the enemy is at home—i.e. is Hitler? On the contrary he tells them that *Great Britain* (the imperialism in rivalry with "his own" imperialism) is "*the most reactionary force in the world*": and he emphasises the sentence by italicising it. Did Liebknecht, in the war of 1914–1918, say that Great Britain or France was "the most reactionary force in the world"? On the contrary he attacked the German imperialists as "the main enemy", just as Frenchmen of like mind attacked the French imperialists and Britons the British.

By way of contrast to Appendix I, I have printed as Appendix II a May Day message smuggled out of Germany by the underground "Independent Socialists", for it shows just *how* a German speaks if he really *is* concentrating his attack on "his own" Government.

The gulf between Ulbricht and Liebknecht is unbridgeable.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ulbricht's central statement—that Great Britain is the most reactionary force in the world—is so much the worse because it is an obvious lie. Does a single one of you believe that British democracy, British capitalism, British imperialism, call it what you will, is "more reactionary" than Hitler-fascism? Again I ask you to forget the atmosphere of the



last few months and to remember what you thought and said before the war. Day after day you contrasted the "peace-loving Western democracies" with Fascist aggression. Day after day you said that while there were many vile features in our capitalism, we nevertheless had priceless liberties which made our civilisation immeasurably superior to that of Fascist Germany. And you were right to say and think these things, and Ulbricht, who said and thought them too, was also right.

It is not implied that *all* recent German Communist statements are of the same order as Ulbricht's. For instance, an article contributed by the German Y.C.L. to an English paper attacks Hitler as strongly as (but not more strongly than) Chamberlain. But a statement attacking all imperialisms equally, coupled with one attacking the *rival* imperialism as the main enemy, shows a tendency directly *opposite* to the clear-cut policy of attacking *your own* imperialism as the main enemy. Moreover, special significance attaches to Ulbricht. He holds an important official position in the German Communist Party: his article was not merely printed in *Die Welt*, but mimeographed and widely distributed: its almost exact coincidence in date with the *Daily Worker* leading article of February 1st, with which I shall shortly deal, points to a definite "turn" in Communist policy: and it is to be inferred from a statement made by German and Austrian Social-Democrats in London that he was in Moscow at the time, and that his article may therefore be said to have the *special* sanction of the Comintern.

\* \* \* \* \*

It must not be assumed that what *lies behind* Ulbricht's article, the intention of it, and indeed its broad *policy* (if separated from the plain falsehoods with which he seeks to render that policy attractive), cannot, in my view, be defended. On the contrary. What is in his mind is this: On a long view, the only really important thing for the working

classes of the whole world is that the Soviet Union, which is the world's spearhead for Socialism, should be secure, and should be kept out of a major war. For the time being at least, that end can best be achieved by the German-Soviet Pact: to the maintenance of the pact, therefore, everything else must be subordinated, *whatever the present consequences*. It follows that the real enemy, inside Germany, of all working classes, including the German working class, is anyone who opposes the pact: and common cause must be made with the Hitler régime against these opponents. The real enemy outside Germany, so far as the present conflict is concerned, is the Franco-British Alliance, because the Soviet Union at present has a pact with Germany but not with France and Britain: and of these two the attack must be concentrated mainly on the British, because the best way of weakening this combination is to divide the French from them. Moreover, what the French and British Governments want is to create in Germany not a Socialist revolution, but a Right Wing, big-capitalist revolution, so that, the German-Soviet Pact having been smashed, Germany can be used as a spearhead for capitalist attack on the Soviet Union. Their victory must, therefore, be opposed.

Most of the assumptions that underlie this case are, I believe, either wholly or partly false; they can, however, be honestly held, and from them the conclusion logically follows. *But what I am concerned to point out is that such a position is, by its very nature, not merely inconsistent with, but totally opposed to, the waging of a revolutionary struggle against the Hitler régime, at any rate during this phase of the war and so long as the German-Soviet Pact is the main plank of Russian foreign policy.*

*Great Britain.* On February 1st (one day before that on which the Ulbricht article appeared) the *Daily Worker* published an editorial entitled "Hitler Speaks". The following is an extract:

“Hitler repeated once again his claim that the war was thrust upon him by Britain. Against this historical fact there is no reply. Britain declared war, not Germany. Attempts were made to end the war, but the Soviet–German peace overtures were rejected by Britain. All through these months the British and French Governments have had the power to end the war. They have chosen to extend it.”

It was clear that nothing but the beginnings of a new and startling tendency<sup>1</sup> could explain, in what is supposed to be a Marxist paper, such a distortion of Marxism: for Marxism does not ask who declares a war, but in what complex of circumstances a war arises.<sup>2</sup> And in doing so Marxism (invaluable as one of the guides, but dangerous as the sole guide, to truth and right action) is undoubtedly correct. The fact, of course, is, as you and I so often used to say, that the war started years ago, and that September 1939 was only a further phase of it; and the meaning of that war was clearly stated on March 10th, 1939, in these words: “The war is being waged by *aggressor states* which in every way infringe upon the interests of the *non-aggressive states*, primarily England, France, and the U.S.A.” The speaker was Stalin.

That seed of February 1st came to fruition in the *Daily Worker* of April 9th and 10th. You must bear with me when I say that a great part of the matter in these two issues might, with the alteration of a word or two here and there, have appeared in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. The man from the moon, reading the main articles, could only have concluded that Hitler was, after all, reasonable enough, and that all the trouble was due solely to the wickedness of Chamberlain and Reynaud.

<sup>1</sup> [Footnote added January 1941.] Or, from another angle (ignoring the Soviet complication) the first plunge, albeit a very maladroit one, into *full* defeatism. See footnote on page 16.

<sup>2</sup> “The question of which group dealt the first military blow or first declared war is of no importance in mapping out the tactics of the Socialists” (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, p. 146).

On Tuesday, April 9th (just after the British mine-laying, and before the news of the German invasion), there were huge headlines "Norway Accuses Allies", "Most Unwarranted Violation of Neutrality" (in quotation marks) and "Demands Immediate Removal of Mines and Warships". The first part of the main article that followed was devoted to protests from the Scandinavian Press; the second part, to a summary of reports from Berlin. These all emphasised that "thanks to the policy of the Western Powers the neutrality of Norway and Sweden no longer exists". And then comes a passage that might well have been written (except for its almost ludicrous incorrectness and lack of prescience), not by an underground worker in Germany, or by any sort of fighter there against Hitler-fascism, but by an underling of Dr. Goebbels or Herr von Ribbentrop. It deserves to be quoted in full:

"There are, however, certain indications from Berlin that the German Government may after all prefer to 'let the situation ride' for the moment.

"For on the one hand, the British action does not directly harm Germany in a military sense—and indeed is obviously directed rather towards the general domination of Scandinavian policy by the Western Powers, with the principal idea of directing it against Russia.

"Secondly, the British violation of Norwegian neutrality has vividly demonstrated the absurdity of the British and French Governments' claims to be 'fighting for the rights of small nations', 'for the maintenance of international law', etc. etc.

"It is therefore possible that the Germans may prefer to act diplomatically, rather than militarily, for the moment."

The whole tone is such that, as one reads, one instinctively substitutes "we" for "the German Government" and "Germany"—so complete is the identification.

This front-page article was reinforced by a leader entitled "Scandinavia in Danger". Here is the opening paragraph:

"The National Government has decided to violate Norwegian neutrality. No matter what moral arguments are put forward in justification the fact remains that international law has been blown sky high by the laying of mines in Norwegian territorial waters."

Later on we are told that all who are opposed to war must raise their voices "in protest against this violation of international law and of Norwegian neutrality". Did you, in the face of such sensitiveness about international law and neutrality, remember how day after day you defended Soviet action in Finland for power-political reasons, saying that there is aggression and aggression, and that in a world at war mere *niceties* no longer have any weight?

In the course of both articles—the front-page one and the leader—*there was not a single word of criticism of Hitler-Germany.*

During that same day (April 9th) we learnt that Germany had invaded Denmark and Norway.

\* \* \* \* \*

This was the biggest piece of "news" since the attack on Poland. With what type of headline, I wondered, would next day's *Daily Worker* (Wednesday, April 10th) report, and protest against, the invasion? The answer is—with *none*. Here are that day's headlines: "Europe Faces Disaster", "Communists Call on Peoples to Act", "Threat of Big Naval, Military and Air Actions".

Below these headlines, and as the main feature of the paper, was printed a manifesto of the Communist Party. *Incredible though it may seem, there was again in this manifesto no single word about the invasion!* Those who read only this manifesto would have been entirely ignorant of the fact that any such invasion had taken place. Not only so: there was not a single specific reference to Hitler-Germany at all. There

was just one sentence—"By the criminal action of the imperialists the war is spreading over Europe"—which might refer either to the Allies alone or to both the Allies and Germany: and there was one other sentence in which both sides were mentioned—"Peaceful people, who have no wish save to remain at peace, are dragged into war against their will: their homes and countries are made the battle-ground of the two imperialist robber camps". But this was immediately followed by the sentence "The Chamberlain Government and the Reynaud Government are hurrying the youth of Britain and France to slaughter and be slaughtered by the German youth", without any balancing sentence accusing the Hitler Government likewise.

"The Chamberlain Government and the Reynaud Government", continues the statement, "had deliberately provoked this extension of the war in Northern Europe by their violation of Norwegian neutrality. With cynical disregard of international law they deliberately laid mine-fields in Norwegian territorial waters in order to extend the war." Now at last, I thought and you must have thought, will come something about the German invasion. But no—not a word; and without a word on this subject the manifesto contrived to end.

The second main article on the front page was "By our Diplomatic Correspondent". Forgive me once again if I say (and ask yourselves whether I am not speaking the truth) that this could hardly have "come out" very differently if it had been written at the dictation of Dr. Goebbels. *The first three sentences* are:

"In a single day and night, British and French Government wrecking of Norwegian neutrality has extended the war front by nearly 1,000 miles.

"Two more countries, Norway and Denmark, have been thrown into the abyss of war.

"Sweden is directly threatened. There is the immediate

possibility of a British and French [yes, 'British and French'—this is not a misprint for 'German'—V.G.] attempt to invade that country, seize its iron fields, and seek to establish a battle front in the far north”.

This immediately follows :

“There were persistent rumours last night of imminent British and French [again no misprint.—V.G.] action against Holland and Belgium. The German radio reports *naturally* [my italics] gave special emphasis to these rumours, in view of the open violation by Britain and France of Norwegian neutrality when they laid their mines.”

But will there not then even at *this* point, even half-way through the article, be, I do not say a protest against, but at least a direct report of the invasion? No. It is just casually *referred to* in a passage which, taken in conjunction with the rest of the article, gives the impression—an impression against which I struggled, but struggled in vain—that the writer is overjoyed at the superior position in which Hitler-fascism has placed itself vis-à-vis Britain and France. We are told that “by seizure of Bergen and other points on the South-West coast” Germany has gained “new advance bases for eventual action against the British Isles”: that “food supplies from Denmark, until the day before yesterday available for Britain, are now entirely in German hands”: and that “if the Germans establish themselves in the north, they are able also to cut the British supplies of iron ore from the Swedish mines which have been shipped from Narvik”. Look up the whole article, I beg you, and consider whether I have in any way exaggerated.

There is one other article on this front page referring to Scandinavia—at the bottom of it, and with the sole headline “Big Naval Battle Reported Off Norwegian Coast”. Under this innocent caption, and after a paragraph reporting rumours of a naval engagement, there are at last, at the very

foot of the column, just fifteen lines imparting the bare information that "Oslo . . . surrendered to the German forces at 4 p.m.", that Bergen and Trondheim were also occupied, and that a landing was made at Narvik.

What of the other three pages? Half-way down the second page there is a report of Mr. Chamberlain's speech; and on the *back* page there is an "Hour by Hour Story of Occupation", and an article "How Britain Forced Norway into War", which *ends* with the date April 8th, and this entry: "British and French navies without warning invade and mine Norwegian territorial waters. Norwegian Government makes 'serious and solemn protest'."

The leading article on page 3 is on the same lines as the Manifesto. There is again no direct report of the invasion, and no mention at all of Hitler-Germany till the last paragraph, which reads "The German imperialists struck back immediately. . . . There is no way out except by the fight of the working class against the war-mongers of all countries"—a paragraph which has the effect of being "thrown in", and does nothing to modify the emphasis of the whole paper.

It is literal truth that only as they carefully pieced together hints, references, and comments, would there gradually have dawned on *Daily Worker* readers, during April 10th, the fact that Germany must have invaded Norway and Denmark.

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Finally, Palme Dutt is reported in the *Daily Worker* of Monday, April 15th, to have said at Hyde Park that "the main responsibility for this crime" (namely the extension of the war to Scandinavia) must be placed "with Chamberlain, Reynaud, Attlee and Blum".

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I am not concerned with any mere question of the sequence of dates, nor with the fact that the *Daily Worker* has since consistently represented that invasion as the *result* of, the *answer* to, the mine-laying, whereas it is clear that the inva-



sion must have required weeks and even months of the most careful preparation. And if the reply is that the intention to lay mines was known in Germany (as it almost certainly was known) two or three weeks before the actual mine-laying, then, if I were interested in making debating points, I should reply that even that was nothing like a sufficient period of preparation. It seems quite likely that we, knowing the German plans, decided to lay mines in order to prevent the Germans reaching Narvik: that the Germans learnt of our intentions: and that they "beat us to it".<sup>1</sup>

But I am not interested in making debating points, for they inevitably ignore realities. What I am pointing out is that the *Daily Worker* presents the British mine-laying as an atrocious crime: that the Communist Party Manifesto issued *after* the German invasion mentions *only* this mine-laying, and not the German invasion at all: that at no time since the invasion has there been the smallest suggestion in the *Daily Worker* that, if the mine-laying was a crime, then the invasion was a crime as great, not to say infinitely greater: that there is something very like jubilation at the advantages gained by

<sup>1</sup> For those who are interested in the sequence of dates, here is a "time-table of aggression" which appeared in the *Tribune* of April 19th. I think that it is probably correct.

"Early March at latest: German preparations for invasion complete; known in London.

"March 28: Allied Supreme Council decides to intensify war. According to *The Times*, April 9, this decision included the mine-laying off Norwegian coast.

"April 3: Churchill appointed co-ordinator. Germans probably know of Allied Supreme Council decision to lay mines. These mines, if extended across all North Sea (as last war), would prevent German invasion of Narvik, make safer a British landing there.

"April 5-6: Midnight April 5-6 is latest time at which German northern force (Scharnhorst Hipper-type cruiser, six destroyers, two troopships) can have left German waters for Narvik. They were off Narvik, and sank H.M.S. Glowworm about 8 a.m. on April 7.

"April 6-7: British mine-laying vessels must have left British ports on 6th or at latest early on 7th. They had finished their job by 4 a.m. on 8th.

"In other words—the British know the Germans are ready to invade. They decide to lay a barrier in the way of part of the invasion, and give themselves a covered flank as a protection for their own landing. The Germans get to know of (or guess at) this decision. They act one to three days before the British, and get their northernmost invading force beyond the mine barrier before this has been begun, much less completed."

the Nazis from the invasion: and that the responsibility for the extension of the war to Scandinavia is attributed, not, as some might reasonably attribute it, equally to "Hitler" and "Chamberlain" (or rather to the imperialist rivalry of which they are the symbols), nor (as I would myself attribute it) primarily to "Hitler" (as representative of Nazi aggressiveness), but primarily to "Chamberlain" and "Reynaud".

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In every issue of the *Daily Worker* that followed that of April 10th this "line" became more and more unmistakable. On April 19th there was an article "War Threat is Growing in Balkans", in which we were told that Chamberlain's declaration of Britain's desire to preserve peace there "paralleled the utterances of the British Government just before the extension of the war to Scandinavia": that "the whole tendency of British capitalist reports yesterday was to suggest that the Allied Powers must take action quickly, in order *allegedly*" [my italics] to prevent "some threatened counter-action" by "other Powers": and that as regards Holland, "British sources yesterday were busily spreading rumours" of a forthcoming German invasion—"rumours considered in many quarters to be a smoke-screen for Allied preparations to follow up Scandinavia by action in the Netherlands". At this point it would hardly have surprised me to read that it was the Allies who invaded Czechoslovakia, Austria, Memel and Poland.

On April 18th "the main burden of Mr. Eden's remarks was to raise the *bogy* [my italics] of a German conquest of Europe and the world". Go down to the *Daily Worker* office, pick out at random any two or three pre-war issues, and the chances are that you will find an *exposé* of Hitler's plans for the conquest of Europe and the world. For instance: "Fascism rages through Europe like a mad beast; it has swallowed Austria and Czechoslovakia, occupied Memel, annexed Albania. It is throwing its noose around Poland; it is

making a drive for the Balkans, threatening Rumania, Yugoslavia and Greece. It is stealthily creeping upon Switzerland, Holland and Belgium. It demands a re-division of colonies and is stretching out to Latin America.”

That is from the May Day Manifesto of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, 1939. At what point in their progress do the mad beast’s rage and noose-throwing and stealthy creeping (language which, to be frank, I never much liked) become a bogey?

On April 20th “Our Diplomatic Correspondent” turns his attention to Italy. Now if you read any papers other than the *Daily Worker* you will know that the invasion of Scandinavia was followed by a pro-Nazi and anti-Allied campaign in the Italian Press of extraordinary virulence: and that Fascist spokesmen, including Mussolini, threatened that they might very soon change from “non-belligerency” to active participation in war on Hitler’s side. But “Our Diplomatic Correspondent”, determined to show that it is always the Allies who aggress, even against Italy, actually writes: “Italian journalists in London [what did he think of them at the time of the Spanish war?—V.G.] have protested against the campaign of provocation in the British capitalist press which has been going on for the past fortnight.” Isn’t there something rather slapdash in just reversing the rôles in this way? And isn’t there a certain contempt for his readers in such unsubtlety of distortion?

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I am most anxious not to overstate my case: and I want to say two things. First, these writers are not pro-Nazi: it is tactical necessity, as they see it, that has driven them into producing a pro-Nazi impression which it would be laughable to deny. Second, the original driving force behind these writers, or most of them—the driving force that made them Communists—is a noble one, before which criticism should be silent if it could. But one *cannot* be silent; and it is neces-

sary to say roundly that these issues of the *Daily Worker* constitute, in their suppressions of the truth and suggestions of the false, a lie so great that they produce, in me at least, a sense of almost intolerable shame. As I read them, I realised the danger inherent in even a mild, common-sense, acceptance of the dictum "The end justifies the means", and to what an abyss, and how quickly, men can descend, if they once begin to depart from the truth. Such methods must be uncompromisingly attacked, for a minor and a major reason. The minor one is that they defeat themselves. That this has happened in the case in question is clear from the *Daily Worker* of April 22nd, which has a column "How We Oppose the War", by William Rust, the editor, of which these are the opening words: "The *Daily Worker* has received a number of letters from its readers dealing with the events in Scandinavia. Some of the letters criticise our presentation. These readers agree with our condemnation of the Chamberlain Government, but think that we should condemn Nazi aggression in similar terms. Otherwise, it is claimed, a pro-Nazi impression is created."

But there is another reason, and an infinitely more important one, why we can have nothing whatever to do with methods of such a kind. This intellectual malpractice, this contempt for the personality of others, this manipulation of the minds of readers by withholding from them the truth which the writer has it in his power to convey, and by making them believe, as he has the power to make them believe, what is false—this is the very mark of fascism: nor is his fault the less grave because he may honestly believe, or believe he believes, that such manipulation is in his readers' own best interests. And fascism, which you detest no less than I, cannot be defeated by Fascist methods.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Footnote added January 1941.] This question is treated more fully in the Epilogue. See p. 265.

*France.* I do not propose to cite certain leaflets which have been published in the British Press, and which, it is alleged, are of Communist origin. A letter to the *New Statesman* of April 27th, in which I enquired why, if they were forgeries, they had not been denounced as such by the British Communist Party when published here, produced a repudiation. I prefer to accept that repudiation, unless and until there is unquestionable evidence to the contrary: and I should have done so the more unhesitatingly had it not been for the effect produced on my mind by the issues of the *Daily Worker* to which I have referred.

But what is beyond all possibility of doubt is that the main fury of the attack by the French Communists is concentrated, as is the *Daily Worker's*, on one or other of the Allies, or on both.

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When we add together, therefore, the evidence from Britain, Germany and France, and remember that the policy of the various Communist Parties is a co-ordinated whole, what do we find? For British Communists "the main enemy is at home"—the Allies: for French Communists "the main enemy is at home"—the Allies: for German Communists "the main enemy is abroad"—the Allies, together with certain elements inside Germany which are fighting the Hitler régime. I do not see, therefore, how we can escape the conclusion that there is a tendency for these Parties, in the present phase, not to concentrate each on the defeat of "its own" bourgeoisie, but rather everywhere (in Germany, France and Britain) to single out at any rate the Allies (and possibly Britain)<sup>1</sup> as the main enemy. And I add in passing that, according to Bjarne Braatoy, the Norwegian Socialist (*Daily Herald*, April 24th), the Labour paper *Arbeiderbladet* and the Liberal *Dagbladet* have not resumed publication

<sup>1</sup> I should say now (January 1941) certainly Britain.

in German-occupied Oslo, but the Communist *Arbeideren* appears as before.

I leave that last sentence just as it was written: but at the moment of passing these pages for press (Friday, May 3rd) the *Daily Worker* publishes an article which at once lifts this piece of evidence out of the sphere of what can be mentioned "in passing" and gives it crucial significance. Under the heading "Communists Stand Fast in Norway" the *Daily Worker* writes:

"Full details are given in *Ny Dag*, the Swedish paper. Writing a few days after the Nazis had entered Oslo, the paper said:—

"The Social-Democratic leaders, their newspaper editorial staffs, the leading organs of the trade unions and Social-Democratic Youth, have left Oslo. Part of them fled in panic.

"... The Labour movement can legally continue its work, and, despite the strict military censorship, can publish its newspaper. Up to the present time only the Communists continue publishing their paper.

"Ninety-five per cent. of the workers remained in Oslo. The Oslo Communists set themselves the task, first of all, of preserving the Labour movement, recognising that it is necessary to use all possibilities of legal activity under the conditions of German military dictatorship."

"On the day when all papers had to publish the manifesto of Quisling, Hitler's deputy in Norway, the Communist paper did not appear. After that it resumed publication—without having published the manifesto.

*"The Communist Party published a manifesto to the Norwegian people on the situation. The German occupation of the country was shown to have resulted from the Anglo-French striving to extend the imperialist war, and in particular the British mine-laying. [My italics.]*

“ ‘The Norwegian people’, the manifesto says, ‘are not interested in war between the great Powers. Therefore, in the new situation resulting from England’s violation of neutrality, they insist that the war must not be transferred to Norwegian territory . . . ’

“ ‘It is necessary that the ranks of the working class be solid and united. . . . It must see to it that its trade union organisations are preserved, that they work in the conditions of the new situation to defend the interests of the workers.’ ”

Is it conceivable that the Gestapo would allow publication of the Communist paper in German-occupied Oslo, if the Communists were waging a revolutionary struggle against the Hitler régime? And look at the italicised words. The Communists, in *Norway*, give Hitler the greatest support they conceivably could give him, by representing *to the Norwegian people* that it is the *Allies* who are responsible for the German occupation. In view of that, Hitler would be foolish if he did not actually *encourage* Communist activity in Oslo, and the continued appearance of the Communist paper. If, by representing the Allies as the aggressors, the Communists help the Nazis in the immediately urgent task of rallying the Norwegian people to the Nazis and away from the Allies, the Nazis can take in their stride Communist “work in the conditions of the new situation to defend the interests of the workers”.

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I said, before I produced the evidence, that “the differing tactics of the various Communist Parties must, in their joint effect and if these tactics continue, tend, even more than would the following of ‘defeatist’ tactics in *each* belligerent country, to increase the probability of a Hitler victory”. That seems to me undeniable; but I repeat once more that no Communist (except perhaps a few fools and hate-ridden paranoiacs of the kind that are to be found in any extreme

movement) *subjectively* for a moment wants a victory by the Hitler-Fascist régime. But if in Germany, France and Britain alike you present the Allies as the main enemy, isn't the result an even greater aid to Hitler than I suggested to be inherent, in view of the Nazi régime, in the straight "defeatist" position of each working class struggling against "its own" régime? And isn't there even a danger that objective pro-Nazism may *develop* into subjective pro-Nazism, rationalised no doubt in all manner of ways, but subjective pro-Nazism none the less?

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The explanation of all this?

A tenable view is that Communist opinion, while by no means desiring a Hitler victory, is definitely anxious to prevent a Hitler defeat, in the fear that the Allies, if victorious, would attack the Soviet Union. But nothing could be more terribly irresponsible, in view of what a Hitler victory would mean, than to *help* Hitler (for, however little the intention, that is what it comes to) not because you want him to win, but because you don't want him to lose. Given his ruthlessness, single-hearted determination and long years of preparation, nothing but the very maximum effort will prevent *our* defeat—a fact which we at last show signs of realising: and help to Hitler is not just preventing his defeat, but assuring his victory.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As to the possibility of a victorious Franco-British alliance attacking the Soviet Union, it seems to me fantastically remote. It is one thing to say that, when the Hitler menace at last stared even the blindest or most reactionary politicians in the face, Mr. Chamberlain, who had helped to "build him up" from hatred of Socialism, would have wished that he should attack Russia rather than that he should attack us: it is quite another to imagine that the ruling class in Britain would, even if the working class permitted it, itself launch an attack on Russia. At the time of the Finnish affair there was much suggestion that this was all a plot on the part of Mr. Chamberlain to "switch the war" against the Soviet Union. Of course there were wild men here, and more in France, who wanted to use the situation for their own base ends—there are always wild men everywhere and in every party: and there were a few who, seeing Germany and Russia as firm allies, very foolishly thought that an attack on Russia was desirable for military and strategic reasons: but I was interested



It seems more probable, however, that the explanation is simpler than this. For whatever reason, from whatever necessities, the Soviet Union has, since before the outbreak of the war, inclined to the German side. The motive for that inclination, the degree of it, and its permanence, are all matters of controversy: but no one of you will, I think, deny its existence.

My own present view is that Russian foreign policy has had, for many years, one sole aim—to keep out of a major war to the last possible moment: this aim being in turn based on the conviction that a second attack on the Socialist fatherland by some combination of capitalist Powers (the first being the war of intervention from 1919 onwards) is in the long run more or less inevitable, and that it is necessary meanwhile to keep out of war, so that the Red Army, Navy, and Air Force may be brought to the highest possible point of size and efficiency.

This, rather than resistance to aggression *generally* even at the risk of war, seems in retrospect to be the meaning of the “collective security” period. It also explains why, that policy having failed, the pact was made with Germany: the calculation being either that, faced with the new situation, Britain would climb down and so preserve peace at the cost of a new act of appeasement, or that, if war came, Russia would at least be out of it. There was also the further

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to see *Izvestia* of April 11th confirming my own view that, so far as responsible British policy was concerned, there was nothing whatever in this reading of the Finnish situation. According to the *Izvestia* article it was now clear that all the talk of Britain and France wanting to help Finland in her resistance to the U.S.S.R. was bunkum, and a façade for the intention to establish a Scandinavian base against Germany. “Britain and France” writes the Moscow paper “under the guise of struggle against the Bolsheviki, under the slogan of struggle against the U.S.S.R. and of ‘defence’ of Finland, wanted to establish themselves in Scandinavia to extend war against Germany.” It might be pointed out that the “guise” of “struggle against the Bolsheviki” and “the slogan of struggle against the U.S.S.R.” were put forward, not by “Britain and France” but by the Communist Parties of Britain and France; but it is interesting to note that in *Izvestia’s* opinion those assertions which were made so confidently in the *Daily Worker* and from platform after platform during the Finnish war were not, apparently, well based.

conviction that Chamberlain was deliberately planning war on the Soviet Union (which is highly improbable) or that, having made a German attack inevitable by his previous policy, he would endeavour to divert it from Britain to the Soviet Union (which is highly probable): and that (which is nearly impossible) he would have been able to carry the people and in particular the working-class of Britain with him in these designs.

The same basic aim—to keep out of major war—explains the invasions of Poland and Finland: for Russia was thereby strengthening her frontiers, and, in her opinion, making an attack on her by a great Power less probable. She no doubt fully considered the counterbalancing risk of alienating sympathetic opinion in other countries.

I do not wish to discuss here the rights or wrongs of this policy: I will only say that the fundamental conception—the inevitability of a joint capitalist attack—seems mechanical and out of date, and that, purely from the point of view of national Soviet interests, the more immediate dangers inherent in the pact—first of making war inevitable, and then of so favouring Hitler that a crushing victory by him, followed by a German attack on Russia itself, became more than a possibility—outweighed the remoter contingency.

Nor is it fruitful to go into motives: men cannot disentangle their own motives, let alone those of other people. The Soviet Union may have pursued this policy from the conviction that to keep out of a major war at all costs, and so to be able to defend the Socialist fatherland when the test came, must ultimately be for the greatest good of the working classes of all countries, whatever the cost to them now: or she may have become deliberately “nationalist”, which is very unlikely: or she may have rationalised “nationalist” feeling as a desire for world progress. In view of the world situation, her foreign policy is, in my opinion, to be very greatly deplored, nor can I bring myself

to think about the German-Soviet Pact or Finland without dismay: but the motive behind that policy is on the least favourable interpretation no worse, and on the most favourable interpretation infinitely better, than that by which most Great Powers have normally been actuated.

However that may be, at some particular point (we do not know exactly when) she thought, rightly or wrongly, that she could best keep out of war by making a pact with Hitler-Germany. And because she inclines to Hitler-Germany, at least unless and until there is a similar pact between her and the Allies, then so inevitably do the Communist Parties in every country, Hitler-Germany included.

If the Soviet Union were to "cool off" towards Germany, feeling that a friendly relation with Great Britain would be an additional safeguard to her and could be achieved, then so would Communists everywhere. There are indications at the moment that such a development is possible; and it would be criminal from every point of view if the British Government failed to make the most strenuous efforts to reach an understanding.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let me put it finally in the following way.

Are you saying this to yourself?

"The Soviet Union is the only country in which the terribly difficult task of abolishing production for private profit, and so of laying the foundations of Communism, has been successfully accomplished. She is the spearhead, the leader, of world socialism.

"It is my duty, therefore, to consider everything from the point of view of the interests of the Soviet Union.

"The Soviet Union is the best judge of her own interests.

"In the existing world situation, or in the present phase of it, the Soviet Union considers that a more or less close understanding between herself and Hitler-Germany is desirable.

“Whatever else this may involve, it certainly involves one thing: general diplomatic support to Germany in her conflict with the Allies, and in particular support of the German thesis that it is the Allies and not Germany that are the aggressors.

“It therefore involves, further, a special pressure on the Allies to ‘stop the war’.

“Communists in the various countries, looking at the world situation, as they must, solely from the standpoint of the Soviet Union, must support this Soviet policy.<sup>1</sup>

“This means different tactics in different countries.

“In Great Britain and France they must maximise the guilt of their own Governments, minimise that of Hitler, and seek in every way to ‘stop the war’: in Germany they must maximise the aggressiveness and reactionary character of the Allies, and support any ‘peace offer’ by Hitler to the Allies (as, for instance, after the conquest of Poland), even if acceptance of such an ‘offer’ would appear to give Hitler the victory.

“In Great Britain and France they must attack their Government’s policy in every particular and by all available means: in Germany they must not attack their Government’s policy insofar as it coincides with that of the Soviet Union, but on the contrary must attack opponents of that policy.

“I think it right, *whatever the consequences*, to play my part in this general scheme: for every possible consequence must be risked, if the interests of the Soviet Union demand it: and the Soviet Union is the only possible judge of her own interests.”

If, but only if, you *are* saying that to yourself, quite fairly and squarely, then you know what you are doing; and I have

<sup>1</sup> This does not of course necessarily follow. It would be possible to imagine a different tactic: close relations between the Soviet Union and the German Reich, and action by Communists in all other countries designed to weaken Hitler in his war with the Allies. I have even heard it suggested by one or two Communists that this is the correct policy. But while such a policy might well be in Soviet interests, in practice it would be almost impossible to implement it.

nothing further to say, *except to beg you to consider, with the fullest sense of responsibility, what the consequences might be.*

I yield to no one in my desire that the achievement of the Soviet Union should not be jeopardised: but even if I did not believe, as I do believe, that the surest way to jeopardise it would be to permit a Hitler victory in his present contest with the Allies, I should still reject utterly the thesis that we must run the very actual and immediate risk of suffering the complete destruction of the Western Labour Movement, and of the great civilisation of which it is a part, in order to safeguard the Soviet Union from a risk that is in any case remote and hypothetical. Triumphs of progress must be placed to the account of the Soviet Union, as well as a great deal that can be less wholeheartedly praised: but I cannot hold the view that our Western civilisation were well lost, if only she be saved. I am as passionately convinced a Socialist as any of you: but—rather and—I want our socialism to be the flowering of that slowly established tradition—call it liberal or Christian or Western or what you will—which, however terribly marred by injustice and oppression, is nevertheless one of the greatest of all the achievements of the human race. We are the inheritors and trustees of that tradition: and it is *our* duty to preserve it, so that we may make a building of which it is no more than the foundation. And if you ask me what I mean by this tradition, I would sum it up in seven words, which you must not dismiss as catch-words, for in them alone is the real source of all human progress—respect for the personality of the individual.

To suffer the enslavement to fascism, not only of Czechoslovakia and Poland, but of Norway and Sweden and Denmark and Belgium and Holland and France and Britain—you must not shirk that final issue—would be, as I see it, one of those sins for which inevitably there could be no forgiveness: for in the room of something imperfectly

good, and with the potentiality of becoming better, we should be allowing something to come in the very essence of which is its power to stabilise its own evil. This, then, is the consequence that you must face. Some with whom I have argued the matter have expressed a complete faith that, whatever may be the present appearance, the Soviet Union will so shape her policy as to secure, *before it is too late*, the defeat of Nazi aggression, and that what she is now doing is a mere preliminary tactic. I certainly do not believe that she desires a decisive victory for Hitler, any more than that she desires a decisive victory for the Allies. But if to keep out of war is more important to her than to prevent a Hitler victory, then it follows that in the meantime Hitler may conquer us—and certainly *will* conquer us if, by following Soviet Union policy from the best of motives, we should find ourselves playing into his hands.

\* \* \* \* \*

If, therefore, you feel with me that the common people of Britain can attain their objectives only if we prevent the disaster of a Hitler victory and weaken his power to dominate and oppress: and if you further feel that in fulfilling this supreme task it is only on ourselves that we can rely: then you will reconsider your position. That is all I ask you to do; and in asking it I appeal to you for the last time—to you whom a passion for human freedom as great as has ever been known in the world's history first dedicated to communism, and who number among yourselves so many of the finest fighters for the workers' cause—to realise what our defeat would mean in terms of human slavery. Read once more not my, but the Comintern's, description, only a year ago, of Hitler fascism: and remember that there is no longer room for insular optimism, and that we can save ourselves from *this* only by a supreme effort:

“The Fascist obscurantists who rule in Germany today, or to be more precise, who wage war upon the German nation,

detest all humanist traditions. The hangmen of the Inquisition, the torturers of the Middle Ages who burned men at the stake in the dark age of superstition and savagery, are the ancestors of the German Fascists. But the terror of Hitler outdoes in crudity, bestiality, and infamy, those bloodhounds of Mediæval Germany. It outvies the most fanatical geniuses for pogrom under Russian Tsarism. It has worked brutishness up into a system which makes the terror of that Inquisition seem tame. Never yet has Germany been so terribly disgraced, and never yet have Europe or the world witnessed any slaughter of innocents carried out with such design, deliberation and sangfroid."

The important thing is that you should understand, as I am sure that many of you do not understand, the trend of Communist policy today and its implications; and should then put to yourselves, each one of you, this question: "Was I right in all I said and thought from 1933 to 1939? And if so, is the present Communist position (or, to avoid any exaggeration, the present tendency) a logical development in changed circumstances of what was at least *my* old position—or am I running the terrible risk, if I follow it, of bringing about the very catastrophe which I struggled so whole-heartedly and for so many years to prevent?"

NOTE II

THE INVASION OF HOLLAND AND THE FALL  
OF FRANCE

IT WOULD HAVE seemed that the extracts from the *Daily Worker* quoted in the preceding chapter could hardly be surpassed for misrepresentation. But the climax had not been reached. On May 9th, "Our Diplomatic Correspondent" (no doubt Mr. Cockburn) wrote as follows, under the heading "TENSION GROWING IN HOLLAND":

"Acute tension and terror prevailed in Holland yesterday.

"I spoke to several Dutch informants yesterday, none of whom can possibly be described as 'pro-German' or 'anti-Ally', or anything but in favour of the maintenance of Dutch neutrality and the rescue of Holland from the horrors of war.

"All of them pointed out that there appears to be no evidence available—certainly none is produced—of any German preparations for the invasion of Holland.

*"Yet these stories are being circulated throughout the world from Allied sources, and the question is: What is the motive?"*  
[Emphasis in original.]

"If the stories are untrue, what possible reason can there be for spreading them except that the Allies are trying to prepare the atmosphere for an invasion of Holland by themselves?

"And if the stories are true, why is there no reasonable evidence of the truth of them?

"The German Government has flatly denied the whole spate of stories.



“Naturally, nobody supposes that, as between one blatant liar and another, there is anything much to choose between the German Government and the British Government.

“Nevertheless, it has been repeatedly stated in the British capitalist Press that after all, the extension of war to the Netherlands would be of greater advantage in the long run to the Allied Governments than to the German Government.

*“There does seem, therefore, to be a serious basis for the fears of the Dutch lest the British should proceed to try to exploit this advantage—possibly by some action similar to their mining of Norwegian territorial waters, which precipitated extension of war to Scandinavia. [Emphasis in original.]*

“The Dutch have cancelled all Army, Navy and Air Force leave, public buildings are under special guard, radio services have closed down, and there is strict control of all telephone and telegraph communication with the outside world.

*“There is stated to be grave tension in Berlin, and expectation of an Allied move at an early moment. [Emphasis in original.]*

“The American Fleet is being ordered to remain in mid-Pacific, and this is taken in some quarters to be connected with the possibility of an invasion of Holland, at which point the question of the ‘protection’ of the Dutch East Indian Empire would become an urgent matter for the American imperialists.”

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That was what the *Daily Worker* said on May 9th. During the early hours of May 10th, Holland was invaded by Germany. Holland and Belgium fell, and on June 17th France capitulated.

## CHAPTER II

### THE COMMUNISTS IN FRANCE:

CONTROVERSY IN *THE NEW STATESMAN* BETWEEN  
VICTOR GOLLANCZ AND PROFESSOR H. LEVY

*July 13th, 27th; August 3rd, 17th, 1940*

(1)

SIR,—Since the fall of France, there has been a tendency for Communists to say to people like myself, "I told you so. What has happened in France has proved up to the hilt how correct Communist policy has been since the outbreak of the war. It is now plain to everyone that, in the line you have taken, you have been a traitor to the working class."

The boot is on the other leg. The French tragedy shows that we of the Labour movement who protested against the Communist "line" were a thousand times right, and that that line has objectively assisted in the worst betrayal of the working class in modern history.

First of all, what *did* we say?

We said: "A 'stop the war' movement in the Allied countries, if of any magnitude or success, could result only in making a smashing victory for Hitler more probable. It is fantastically unrealistic to imagine that it would bring the war to an end by means of revolutions in *all* countries, with a Socialist peace as a result: to argue like this ignores, among other things, (a) the Gestapo organisation, with its immense power to stamp out the first flames of revolt, (b) the colossal strength and efficiency of the Hitler war machine, and the appalling speed with which it moves. If a 'stop the war' movement were seriously to undermine national resistance in

the Allied countries, the result would be a Hitler conquest long before any revolutionary movement in Germany could even begin to overthrow the Nazi régime. Moreover, at the moment when, in one or other of the Allied countries, defeat seriously threatened, at that moment the pro-Fascist forces *inside* the country would immediately 'sell out' to the enemy, and impose a Fascist régime, dependent upon Hitler. Once that had happened all possibilities of 'revolution' on the part of Communists or anybody else would be at an end: for to talk of revolution in such circumstances is to talk, with criminal frivolity, in the language of the barricades, instead of in that of the present era of tanks, aeroplanes and Gestapo. Once the German army were in control, backed up by a native puppet government, resistance would be *too late*."

As recently as a fortnight before the French collapse, one of the most distinguished Communists in England, to whom I put this argument, replied as follows: "You are absolutely wrong. It does look as if success by Hitler in France is imminent. But what will happen in the moment of defeat is that the French working class, led by the Communist Party, will rise up, turn the war into a real people's war of national defence, and 'find a way' [nauseating formula, which covers a loose and lazy refusal to think with clearness and precision] to defeat the German and French Fascists: and the Soviet Union will help them by at once declaring war on Germany." I quote my friend's remark (typical of what Communists were saying everywhere) to show to what depths of folly intelligent men can sink if they refuse to make a realistic and up-to-the-minute appraisal, as Lenin nearly always made, of the various forces and factors in a given situation, and prefer to theorise in a vacuum of their own creation.

And I ask—who has been right? Hasn't the appalling thing that has happened in France proved the correctness of our analysis? Hasn't it proved how fatuous was that of our opponents?

The *Daily Worker*, observing the betrayal of France by Pétain, Laval, Baudouin and the rest, shouts "We told you so." A poor and bitter sort of triumph. They pursued a policy which, they calculated, would defeat fascism "everywhere": it has failed so disastrously that moment by moment, with the horrible fatality of a gigantic landslide, the country of the Revolution and the Commune is passing ever more completely into the camp of fascism. Is it the part of a good Marxist or a sane man to *fail* in preventing an irreparable tragedy, and then to cry "I told you so: see how our enemies have betrayed us!" On the contrary, it is the part of a good Marxist and a sane man to act in such a way that *the tragedy does not occur*, and then to give the shout of victory, "Look! Our enemies are in flight!"

The French Communists failed so to act. Declaring day in and day out that this was an imperialist war, that the working class had no interest in it, and that the major enemy was British finance, they undermined the French resistance to Hitler as surely as did, with a different purpose, the French Fascists themselves: and the result, as anybody could have foreseen, was not to create a social revolution in France, but to make Hitler's victory over France—the victory of Hitler and the French Fascists over the French working class—inevitable. And now, when the disaster to which they have contributed is staring them in the face, now, when it is *too late*, they distribute illegal leaflets, strike in Paris, and so brave the concentration camp and the firing-squad with that heroism which has always been their noble characteristic, but which now cannot influence (except very remotely and indirectly, by way of example) the progress of what is at once the greatest tragedy and the greatest opportunity that the world has ever known.

If from the beginning the French Communists, while unrelentingly attacking capitalism and imperialism, had at the same time *led* the defence of the French people against Hitler,

then, as the danger drew nearer, they would have been in a position *to take over the war*: they could have put up a revolutionary defence against Hitler, and could at the same time have defeated "their own" traitors. There would have been no question of not defending Paris: and France would have been fighting to this day.

If I am asked "How could the French Communists have done this, in view of their suppression?" then I reply two things. First, they should have made every effort to *prevent* suppression, instead of giving the French Government all possible excuses for suppressing them. Secondly, even if nevertheless they had been partially or wholly suppressed, their message could not have failed to rouse all the common people of France if it had been the inspiring one of *revolutionary national defence* against fascism, the spearhead of which, they should never have ceased to explain, was the Nazi offensive, with "their own" Fascists as its camp-followers.

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Here in Britain there has been some change of "line".<sup>1</sup> But while the *Daily Worker* now talks defence in one column, in the next it attacks those in the United States who are sending us the arms with which to defend ourselves, on the ground that they are "dragging America into the war". A few days ago an International Brigader was asked whether he and his comrades would help to train certain L.D.V.s in the methods of the Spanish War. He replied, "No: we don't support the war yet." *Yet* is the operative word. If not *yet*, with Hitler at the gate, then in Heaven's name *when*? Have they learned nothing from the tragedy of France?

VICTOR GOLLANCZ

(2)

SIR,—I have spoken with Gollancz on many platforms and always reached some measure of agreement. May I therefore say a word on the present controversy?

<sup>1</sup> [Footnote added January 1941.] No, this was a mere appearance: see later.

The Communist Party holds that the enemy is capitalism, which wages a class war inside each country, exploiting labour power, and shutting down on forward movements that threaten its domination. Externally the class war is waged by throwing workers into the struggle to acquire or to maintain empire, the expression of capitalist rivalries. The Communist Party maintains that these are twin aspects of the same class war, that capitalism seeks to maintain its hold on exploitation at all costs, and that one of the costs it is prepared to pay is the independence of one capitalist group from another. Hence one group will appease, unite or submit to another, but will not hand over its power to the workers. Hence Austria, Czechoslovakia, Spain.

Mr. Gollancz presses the differences between these two aspects of the class war, holding that one section of the capitalist class is inherently more dangerous to the workers than another, and that by supporting the one against the other, the side supported will rather allow the workers to achieve control than submit to its rival.

Only the logic of past history can decide which of these is the better guide to action, but past history must not be distorted in order to support our preference. It is clear, however, that the supporters of the one line must regard those of the other as undermining the prospects of success. Mr. Gollancz, for example, holds that the French Communist Party were largely responsible for the over-running of France.

Now during the years leading up to the present war, both he and the Communist Party sought to preserve the peace of Europe by mobilising progressive forces against war, against armament loans to Germany, and the sale of war materials to that country. They asserted that the capitalists of the West were doing this in order to direct the war into a German-Soviet war. These were actions by Mr. Gollancz and the Communist Party in defence of British and French workers. The Popular Front drive was part of that same

defensive policy. Nevertheless Chamberlain and Daladier remained in power internally, and appeased externally; and both Mr. Gollancz and the Communist Party saw the nature of the appeasement as based on the assumption of a German-Soviet war. Unprepared for a war in the West, therefore, Chamberlain and Daladier took the first step towards the defeat of France. The second and more immediate step was taken immediately before and after the Czech appeasement.

We have to remember that capitalism in waging its wars does so in a capitalist way. In detail, it arms for profit, and not efficiency. Can we suppose for example that the French and British Governments gave their scientific and technical experts financial *carte blanche* to decide whether the Maginot Line was invulnerable, when it did not extend to the coast? The fullest use of scientists is not a matter that stands to the credit of capitalism even during war. Having handed over the Poldi Works at Kladno in Czechoslovakia where the AKC<sub>4</sub> steel was produced that protected the huge tanks that broke through the French lines, are we to suppose that the British and French Governments immediately in all haste gave their scientists financial *carte blanche* to "waste" money on the fullest defence against these tanks? The political and financial policy that stood behind this was surely responsible for opening the door wide to the German advance. The logic of appeasement, and the inability of British and French capitalism to mobilise its science and technology, and its resources generally, quickly enough, ran their course. These are only typical of the fact that the French workers had already been sold to German capitalism, consciously or unconsciously does not matter, before the war began. In the light of that it is simply fantastic to lay the blame on the shoulders of the French Communists who had spent their energy exposing precisely this policy.

There was one final step necessary, and that was to ensure that capitalist class domination would be maintained. For

this it was necessary to blame the French collapse on the shoulders of the most advanced section of the workers, in order to discredit it in the eyes of their comrades. That is the final card. Must Mr. Gollancz play it? H. LEVY

[Mr. Gollancz will no doubt answer for himself, but we must point out that he nowhere suggested that the Communists were responsible for the collapse of France.—  
ED. N.S. & N.]

(3)

SIR,—My friend, Professor Levy, as you pointed out, answers something I have never said. I did not “blame the French collapse on the shoulders of” the Communists: I explicitly “blamed it on” the reactionaries. I wrote, “the betrayal of France by Pétain, Laval, Baudouin and the rest”: I wrote, too, that opponents of the Communist “line” had always pointed out that “at the moment when, in one or other of the Allied countries, defeat seriously threatened, at that moment the pro-Fascist forces *inside* the country would immediately ‘sell out’ to the enemy, and impose a Fascist régime, dependent upon Hitler”: and I was bold enough to add that we had been correct.

I was dealing only with one specific point. Communists were saying that the fall of France proved the correctness of their line: it seemed important to reply that, on the contrary, this line had “objectively assisted” in the Pétain betrayal. The meaning, of course, was that erroneous Communist tactics had made it easier for the French Fascists to betray France, however little Communists might and did desire such a result. Had I been attempting anything so ambitious as a comprehensive analysis of the collapse, I should have touched on many other points.

It is, therefore, recklessly preposterous of Levy to equate me with Lords Newton and Elibank, as he almost seems to



do in the last paragraph of his otherwise very friendly letter. This is, let me call it, an inter-Left dispute. Even if he refuses to recognise that I am on the same side of the barricades as he, I gladly recognise that he is on the same side as I. We are discussing tactics, not motives or objectives.

Nevertheless, Levy's letter is revealing, and, therefore, important. May I summarise his argument?

1. "The enemy is capitalism, which wages a class war inside each country."

2. "Externally, the class war is waged by throwing the workers into the struggle to acquire or to maintain empire."

3. *No section of the capitalist class is inherently more dangerous to the workers than any other: the workers will gain nothing by supporting one side against the other, for the side supported will submit to its rival rather than allow the workers to achieve control.* (This is what Levy means by his third paragraph.)

4. Chamberlain and Daladier took the first step towards the defeat of France because, assuming that they could direct Germany against the Soviet Union, they were unprepared for a war in the West.

5. Capitalism wages war in a capitalist way—arming for profit and not efficiency. The political and financial policy of French and British capitalism was therefore responsible for "opening the door wide to the German advance".

6. It follows that "the French workers had already been sold to German capitalism . . . before the war began".

The argument falls into two distinct halves. (1), (2) and (3) mean that, from the workers' point of view, there is nothing to choose between the two sides, both of which are deliberately making war, at the expense of the workers, for imperialist ends: that it is irrelevant whether or not the Nazis conquer Britain and France: and that (lest by any chance some fool might after all regard it as relevant) for the workers to "support" the war is actually to make defeat

more probable, for the Government will submit to the enemy directly it sees a danger of the workers obtaining control. (4), (5) and (6) mean that capitalism can't wage war effectively anyhow (but apparently Nazism, which a minute ago was just "capitalism", can): that the war was lost—for France, and presumably for Britain—before it began: so why worry? Get on with the class struggle.

The slap-dash frivolity of all this, the unadulterated defeatism—Socialist, working-class defeatism—is staggering. It matters overwhelmingly whether or not Nazism conquers Britain and France: and I suspect that Levy is as aware of this as I am—but, if he admitted it (as he used to), his game of Patience wouldn't "come out". Once let the Gestapo into the stronghold—and the native Fascists are always only too glad to hasten the entry—and where is there any hope of Socialist advance? At the barricades, perhaps—with tanks and machine-guns on the other side, and aeroplanes overhead.

It is cowardly to suggest that the workers should not "support" the war because if they do the capitalists, fearing their growing power, are the more likely to sell out to the enemy. *It is the job of the workers to prevent this by getting ever more control, and to have Socialist confidence that they can do so.* Moreover, France shows, what was always obvious, that it is *defeat*, and not the prospect of victory, which gives the traitors their opportunity.

Of course it is true that capitalism cannot wage this sort of war efficiently. But that is an argument in favour of ceaseless struggle for a progressive transition to Socialism *as an instrument* of the fight against Hitler—the "war on two fronts" of Harry Pollitt's pamphlet. It is not an argument for standing aside, on the plea that we are beaten already.

I believe in what Levy sees (over simply) as the class struggle, and in what I see as the struggle for the economic, intellectual and spiritual emancipation of mankind, as passionately as he: but I want to win it *now, while there is yet*

*time*—and before the opportunity is lost, perhaps for generations. That means a careful appraisal of all the factors in the world situation, a weighing of relative strengths, a consideration of just what tactics can be pursued at this or that point with success and what cannot, and meantime and above all the prevention of defeat both from without and from within while the final triumph over *all* our enemies is being prepared. This is not easy—not by any means as easy as the over-simplified tactic of just attacking “one’s own” Government. But *that* road leads to Vichy.

VICTOR GOLLANCZ

(4)

SIR,—I was concerned only with the Chamberlain-Daladier policy in reference to France and its collapse. Mr. Gollancz falsely extends it to Britain in detail, and concludes that I hold “it is irrelevant whether or not the Nazis conquer Britain”. The Gollancz of a year ago would not have written such nonsense. I repudiate it. Everyone will fight a Nazi conquest, including myself, in so far as the Government by its policy will allow him to do so.

There are two distinct ways offered. First, the way shown by the Spanish Republic, of *increasing* democratic organisation in which the forces of the people are mobilised through the widest possible extension of rights and liberties, through the organisations of the working class, and through socialised industry. The anti-Nazi, anti-Fascist object in view is thereby reflected through the methods adopted. Secondly, the way shown by Italy, Germany, and the French Government, through the rapid advance of monopoly capitalism whether private or through the State, the suppression of democratic rights, the imprisonment of anti-Nazis and anti-Fascists, the control of the trade unions and of the Press. This has led in each case directly to fascism.

At the present stage in Britain—as it was in France—the second method is ineffective even for its avowed purpose, since it leaves trade secrets to play their part in the struggle for monopoly, scorns the fullest use of science, since not efficiency but profit is the criterion applied in war production, and refuses the help of foreign anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist specialists.

The history of the controlling personalities in the present Government during the past critical few years, their social, industrial and financial affiliations, and the slump in democratic freedom since the outbreak of war suffice to show that it is the second method that is being adopted here. So it was in France: hence the actions of the Communists there. Mr. Gollancz may protest that he wants the first, but his writings and his criticisms appear to me to support the second. Chamberlain also protested that he wanted peace, but he got war. It is precisely because I am profoundly concerned about the overrunning of this country by Nazis and Fascists that I support the first.

H. LEVY

\* \* \* \* \*

[What Lenin called “the penetrating reader” will not fail to note that Professor Levy, in his second letter, completely and with welcome haste reverses the position which he took up in his first: the same reader will be able to judge for himself whether I drew from the latter the smallest false inference.

In his first letter—and remember the situation on July 27th, when it appeared—Levy says *no word* about the necessity of preventing a Nazi conquest of Britain. Now, of course, the whole point of my first letter, to which Levy was replying, was to plead that the lesson of the French disaster should be applied to Britain—see the concluding paragraph of that letter. I tried to show that the Communists, by their policy, had objectively assisted in the betrayal of France to the

Nazis, and in effect begged the Communists to change their policy here. Whereupon Levy, *speaking of the world in general (and therefore of course of Britain) as well as of France*, tells me that no section of the capitalist class is inherently more dangerous to the workers than any other (i.e. the Nazis are no more dangerous than the British capitalists), and that the workers will gain nothing by supporting one side against the other, for the side supported will submit to its rival rather than allow the workers to achieve control. For I repeat that the third paragraph of Levy's first letter, taken in conjunction with the opening words of the fourth paragraph and with the letter as a whole, means that or nothing. And I repeat, too, that the whole of that letter is an expression of the view that this is an imperialist war and that in an imperialist war it is irrelevant to the workers which of the contending Governments wins (though it is highly desirable that neither should)—or, put in terms of the realities of July 1940, "it is irrelevant whether Hitler conquers Britain or Churchill conquers Germany".

Anxious to put himself right (not with "the authorities", for he is an honest man, but with his own mind and heart), Levy says "Everyone will fight a Nazi conquest, including myself, in so far as the Government by its policy will allow him to do so." Well, I alluded at the end of my first letter to the episode of the International Brigader. I did not tell the whole story, because I feared I might be betraying a confidence: but as the matter is now an open secret, it is possible to be more explicit. The country, be it remembered, was in deadly peril: invasion might have occurred at any moment: and in view of our losses at Dunkirk the immediate issue was, not whether we should gradually lose the war over a long period by reactionary capitalist organisation, but whether we should be totally conquered, as France had been, in the next few weeks or even days. In that emergency, there sprang from the soil (but, alas, not fully armed) the Local

Defence Volunteers. But one thing more was necessary. There was a shortage of regular arms and equipment: there were comparatively few men here who understood how, even with a minimum of such equipment, effective resistance might be organised by the methods employed in the Spanish Civil War. Tom Wintringham was one of those men. He had been the Commander of the British Battalion of the International Brigade: he had been a member of the Communist Party, but was one no longer, and believed passionately that the first job of a Socialist was to prevent a Nazi conquest of Britain. He organised a camp at Osterley Park for passing on to selected Volunteers, drawn from the various units, the experience he had gained in Spain. *The International Brigade Association took the decision that no one of its members should help him in this work, which might well have turned the scale in the event of a Nazi invasion. Communist influence is so strong in the I.B.A. that it could not conceivably have taken this decision without the wholehearted approval, if not on the direct instruction, of the Communist Party leadership.* And the reason was that the Communist leaders *still* believed that their job was, not to "defend the Fatherland", but to attack "their own" Government—in other words, the war effort of the nation. What nonsense, therefore, for Levy to say that "everyone" (including Communists, for whom he is specifically apologising) "will fight a Nazi conquest, in so far as the Government by its policy will allow him to do so".

Levy's lack of clarity, if he will forgive me for calling it such, was paralleled by that of a private correspondent. Knowing of his sympathy with the C.P. line, but also of his desire for a British victory, I wrote to him about the L.D.V. episode. He replied in effect: "You're quite wrong: it's the other way about: I know cases of Communists who've tried to get into the L.D.V.'s and the Army, but have been prevented from doing so by reactionary local bigwigs."

This reveals a complete misconception. Of course in many

places, and particularly in the early days, reactionaries tried to keep Socialists out of the Home Guard: that is one reason why, as George Orwell shows later in this volume, every Socialist should go into it. But on defeatist theory Communists were right *both* in refusing to help Tom Wintringham *and* in going into the armed forces. By helping Tom Wintringham, they would be helping the Government in its war effort; by going into the armed forces, they could spread their doctrine there. Lenin is as forthright on this point as ever: "The idea of refusing to serve in the army, of strikes against the war, etc., is mere foolishness, it is the miserable and cowardly dream of an unarmed struggle against an armed bourgeoisie, it is a weak yearning for the abolition of capitalism without a desperate civil war or series of wars. Propaganda of class struggle even in the midst of war is the duty of a Socialist." <sup>1</sup>

That the attitude of the Communist Party towards the Home Guard is unchanged today is proved by an otherwise trivial incident that occurs at the moment of writing (January 1941). Tom Wintringham's right-hand man at Osterley was Hugh Slater, who had been Chief of Operations on the International Brigade Staff in Spain in 1938. Though "supporting" the war, he remained a member of the Communist Party, and for the time being was not expelled. But he has just published a book entitled *Home Guard for Victory!*, which is in effect a complete guide to the defence of Britain. There is no word of politics in it: nothing about the rightness or wrongness of the war: only a brilliant description of the various methods the Nazis might use in invading the country, and the best way to repel them. *For writing and publishing this book, Slater has at once been expelled from the Communist Party.*

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In the remainder of his letter, Levy makes a *volte face* from his previous position to the correct one of "the war on two

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, p. 88. Published on November 1st, 1914.

fronts"—which means (to anticipate a later contributor to this volume) "supporting the country's war effort by every means in our power, while fighting reaction and plutocracy and pressing for the adoption of Labour's home, Imperial and foreign policy as necessary to enlist in our cause the revolutionary and democratic forces on the Continent and in the Colonies".

Why is there such an extraordinary contrast in two letters from a scientist of such scrupulous integrity as Professor Levy? Because in the first he is theorising in a vacuum, without any reference to the hard facts of the actual situation: such reasoning passes as "Marxism", but is really idealism at its worst. Moreover, he is showing loyalty to old comrades, and is also influenced perhaps by the mystical doctrine that the Communist Party (of which he is not a member), however many its mistakes, and however disastrous their results, is the party, and the only party, of the working class, and must therefore *in public* be undeviatingly supported.

But when he is shown "whither the argument leads" he recoils in horror. For as a scientist and as a devoted and lifelong fighter for the underdog, he hates Nazism as passionately as any and far more passionately than most, is fully aware of the consequences of a Nazi victory, and would do anything in his power to prevent it. That is why his support of the Communist position, into which he is led by a variety of motives (including his over-concentration as a scientist on the inefficiency, to put it no worse, of capitalism), is so irritating and so dangerous.

As to the idea that I "support" "the rapid advance of monopoly capitalism", annoyance in controversy should not produce so silly an accusation. Levy knows very well that I detest capitalism. *A fortiori*, I detest Nazism.]



NOTE III

FROM THE FALL OF FRANCE TO THE  
ATTACK ON LONDON

“THE MEN OF MUNICH”: AMERICA: THE FIFTY  
DESTROYERS: EIRE

AS THE *PANZERDIVISIONEN* raced on to Paris: while, hour by hour, we were awaiting news of the capitulation of the French Government: and during the days when, after the fall of France, even the most complacent became aware that we were in immediate danger of complete defeat, and that only a supreme national effort could save us, the “line” of the Communist Party *appeared* to take a turn towards that of “Defence of the Fatherland”. This was the period of the “Men of Munich” campaign.

“Take warning”, we were told in effect, “from what has happened in France. Not only was the ruling class unable, because of its incompetence, to defend the French people against the Nazis: it deliberately sold out to Hitler, because when the final crisis came it knew that defence against Hitler must mean giving power to the working class, and it preferred a Hitler victory. The same thing will happen here, unless we heed that terrible warning. The Men of Munich must go: we must get a People’s Government, a Government which will organise the defence of the people in the face of fascism from within and from without, and which will make a People’s Peace based on no indemnities and no annexations.”

A considerable number of people was misled by this apparent change of line. “Now at least”, some of us were told, “you must support the C.P. campaign. Up to this

point, its propaganda and its actions may have been right or may have been wrong: but in this testing time it is raising a banner round which every progressive must rally. Hitler is at the gate: the one urgency is to stem his onslaught. Have you no fear that a Cabinet in which, to give but a single name, Chamberlain still sits, will do a gigantic Munich and sell us all into slavery as Pétain sold France? Do you imagine that the ruling class will wait here for Hitler to capture them? If so, you have learned nothing. The ruling class has its aeroplanes and its ships, and when the real danger comes will get away to Canada on the plea of continuing the war from overseas, and will leave *us* to be enslaved.

“Nor is it merely a question of conscious and deliberate treachery. Only a supreme effort, only a great upsurge of revolutionary feeling, can throw back Hitler *now*. How can such an effort be made, when private profit and class interests are still the ruling motives in our war-time industry? How can there be an upsurge of revolutionary feeling, with the Churchills and Chamberlains and Halifaxes at our head? What the Communists want is to turn the war into a real people’s war against Hitler-fascism, which, by reason of being such a war, will also be a war against fascism everywhere. That is what you want, too. Why therefore do you hold aloof?”

The appeal was a clever one—far cleverer than most of the Communist appeals since the outbreak of the war—for it was based on a substantial measure of truth. So long as ex-appeaser elements still remained in positions of authority, there was danger that they might force a capitulation, for few but the men themselves could know whether they were, in their hearts, appeasers still. (In point of fact, many of them had become extreme “die-hards”.) More important, their mere record made them wholly unsuitable as leaders of the nation, whatever their present views, and so weakened national confidence at a time when confidence was all-

important. Again, it was true that, apart from any question of "selling out", private profit and class interests must necessarily, on a long view, render victory hazardous, and even on a very short view could not produce that hundred per cent national enthusiasm which was the surest way to repel the immediate danger. Finally, a decisive move to the Left both in the Government and in our social and economic system would have been the surest way of putting heart into progressive elements all over the world, and so both of shortening the war, and of ending it, when the end came, by the best kind of peace.

For all that, the case was absurdly overstated. There was no possibility whatever of Mr. Churchill throwing up the sponge and leaving the people in the lurch; there was only a small possibility of his being forced by pro-Nazi and appeaser elements into making a Pétain surrender; and as for upsurge of popular feeling, those were the days, not only of Local Defence Volunteers, but of an amazing spirit in the factories and workshops by which, with a miracle of speed, the losses of Dunkirk were partially made good.

However that may be, the important thing to note is that the apparent change of line to "defence of the Fatherland" was a change in appearance only. The public reaction to the immediate danger, a reaction from which the rank and file of Communists were not immune, compelled some concessions in phraseology and even more in emphasis: and these concessions had their effect, for phrases like, for instance, "defence from fascism from without and from within" were erroneously interpreted by many to indicate that the C.P. now "supported" the war against Hitler, in so far as the Government would wage it vigorously and efficiently and without any thought of capitulation—as Professor Levy said, "Everyone will fight a Nazi conquest, including myself, in so far as the Government by its policy will allow him to do so." In other words, a return to the "war on two fronts" of

Pollitt's September 1939 pamphlet. But in fact there was no change of line whatsoever—merely a change of tactics to meet the new situation. The C.P. went so far, indeed, as privately to circulate a document to selected individuals in which this was made clear, and any possible misconception removed. To state this is not to betray a confidence, for the document was sent to the writer.

In fact, C.P. policy remained precisely what it had been since October 1939—anti-war and “defeatist”; and the “Men of Munich” campaign was designed, not to bring victory, but to attack “our own” Government (in accordance with Lenin's instructions) by a tactic considered most suitable for the given situation.

There was an episode, trifling in itself, about this time that might have opened the eyes of any who were being deceived. A book was published, entitled *Guilty Men*, which achieved a huge circulation and was sold on the street-curbs of our great cities. It constituted a furious indictment of the “Men of Munich”, and a demand that they should be removed from positions of power and authority. It was clearly an invaluable aid in any attempt to alter the composition of the Government. *The “Daily Worker” did not give it so much as a single line of review. For a very simple reason. The author made it clear that he desired to get rid of the “Men of Munich” because he desired victory. And, crime of crimes, he praised the new spirit which Mr. Churchill had breathed into the Administration since he had become Premier.*

The book was apparently so distasteful to the C.P. that Mr. Ivor Montagu produced, as a counterblast, *The Traitor Class*, in which he endeavoured to keep clear of any such errors. Now Mr. Montagu is an interesting case. His orthodoxy as a member of the Communist Party might seem to be beyond question. For all that, his writings and sayings sometimes reveal, buried sufficiently deep, a certain conflict. It was recently remarked that Mr. Montagu is always fight-

ing, since the "change of line", against his better self—but that unfortunately he always wins.

For instance, Mr. Montagu is reported in the *Sheffield Telegraph* to have said recently at Leeds: "Russia was anxious chiefly to keep out of the war, and had no interest in helping either side to be victorious. A Hitler victory, however, would be less acceptable to her than a British victory, because Germany was nearer to the Soviet Union, and therefore a greater menace to her." This is perhaps the beginning of a dangerous "deviation"; because if the situation should so develop (let it be put that way) that the only alternatives are a British victory or a German victory, then, if the Soviet Union should want a British victory as being preferable to a German victory, wouldn't Communists be driven into supporting the British war effort? *Attention, M. Montagu!*

But to return to *The Traitor Class*. This little book was the occasion of a highly critical and somewhat acid review in a recent *Labour Monthly* by Mr. William Rust. Mr. Rust is popularly supposed to be one of the ruling triumvirate at King Street, and also to be editor of the *Daily Worker*. His doctrine must therefore be regarded as "official"; and there certainly appears to be no Trojan Horse in *his* heart. He know exactly what he wants.

Mr. Rust writes:

"The conception 'traitor class' is clearly open to misinterpretation. As a popular title it has an obvious appeal, but it can also convey the meaning that the ruling class are acting as traitors *instead of carrying on a real People's War against fascism*. [My emphasis.]

"In view of this possible misconception, the author might well have included a basic analysis of the war and have departed somewhat from the literary method of building up his case on quotations plus brief political generalisations.

“The absence of any such treatment and the presence of various unclear and even wrong generalisations on current political events, means that, in spite of many good things, the book as a whole may not help to dispel the illusions of certain readers regarding the character of the war.”

This passage throws rather an unkind light on Mr. Montagu's conflict: but, what is far more important, it also illuminates the real nature of official Communist policy during the “Men of Munich” period. Those who thought that the “line” had become “defensist” at the time of the collapse of France, and that all the C.P. now at least desired (quite rightly) was that there should not be the same treachery vis-à-vis Hitler here as in France, will find Mr. Rust's remarks enlightening.

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Mention has already been made of the International Brigade Association's decision that no member of it should help Tom Wintringham in his L.D.V. work at Osterley Park. This should be sufficient to make it clear that, under some camouflage, the “party line” was as “defeatist” during the period under review as it was when the Nazis invaded Denmark and Norway. If you really want to “defend the Fatherland” “to defeat fascism from without as well as from within”, you don't refuse to co-operate in the most immediately practical way of doing it.

### AMERICAN AID

But the L.D.V. question is insignificant in comparison with that of America. When Pétain capitulated, two things became apparent: first, unless we got *immediate* help from America—in aircraft, Tommy-guns, rifles, ammunition, destroyers—nothing but a miracle could prevent our decisive defeat in a matter of months or weeks or days: secondly, unless America were to be steadily and systematically converted

into an arsenal for us, then even if we weathered the immediate crisis our defeat would be merely deferred.

And this was the time when, while the *Daily Worker* talked of "defence from fascism within and without" in one column, in the next it carried on a furious campaign against America sending us the aid we so sorely needed.

It would be quite untrue to say that there was no sense or logic in the "anti-American-aid" campaign; that honest men could not have conducted it; and that anyone who did so was an "agent of Hitler". On the contrary, there was an extreme logic, an almost insane logic, the logic, one might say, of men who reason in an abstract world that lies "somewhere up in the sky" and not in our real and highly complex world here down below. One might, indeed, go further, and say that *not* to have conducted this campaign would have been an unpardonable betrayal of the Communist position.

I must not anticipate here what John Strachey is to write: but the ideological basis of this campaign may be briefly stated. Here is the argument. This is an imperialist war, a war for the re-division of the world, a war for the profits of the rich alike in Britain and in Germany. The working class in *every* country can have no interest in it; it can bring them no advantage whatsoever, but only blood and sweat and tears. Every country brought into the war, therefore, every "extension of the war", is so much loss; it can only mean that still more members of the working class have to suffer in order to preserve the profits of the rich. But American aid to Britain must mean America's eventual entry into the war; it is therefore to be wholly opposed.

But that is only the beginning. In an imperialist war it is the duty of the working class in each country to regard "its own" Government as the enemy, to concentrate all its attacks against that Government. The very last thing it must do is to *help* its Government against the rival imperialism; and as its own Government gets into greater and greater danger

vis-à-vis its rival, that is precisely the time when any *aid* to its Government, any assistance to it in its attempts to extricate itself from the peril, would be a gross betrayal of working-class interests, and, therefore, of all our hopes of a better future for mankind. "The Government's danger is the working-class's opportunity."

Finally, there is a *special* danger in an Anglo-American tie-up. An Anglo-American imperialist bloc (in which British imperialism would be the junior partner, mortgaged up to the hilt to Wall Street) would, if triumphant, be the most reactionary force in the world; more reactionary than Hitler triumphant, for (without reference to the present balance of evil as between Hitler-fascism on the one hand and Anglo-American imperialism on the other) it would be far more stable. The growth of co-operation, therefore, between Britain and the United States is the worst of all menaces to the working class, the strongest of all barriers to the coming of Socialism.

The attack on any aid from America to Britain is, then, logical and honourable. It makes perfect sense—but *only on one assumption: namely, that in this war defeatist tactics are in the best interests of the working class.* On any other assumption it makes nonsense. It is totally inconsistent with the position of "defensism".<sup>1</sup>

It is therefore no accident that at no time has the Communist Party carried on its campaign against American aid with a more single-minded enthusiasm than at the moment

<sup>1</sup> When, however, it was desirable to introduce the "defensist" note, in order to attack the "Men of Munich" for bringing the country into its perilous position, *for that purpose* it might be suggested that American aid was all-important, but that we shouldn't get it unless the "Men of Munich" went. The feature of the *Daily Worker* of July 8th was a "splash" report of a "Great Conference against Men of Munich" at which the principal speaker was Mr. D. N. Pritt, K.C., M.P. Among other things it is reported that "he referred to Dunkirk as tearing the last rag of Mr. Chamberlain's reputation from him. His continued retention in the Government sapped the confidence of our own people, *made any support from the U.S.A. far more difficult* [my italics], and presented a formidable obstacle to the vital task of convincing the U.S.S.R. that our Government is in earnest in seeking closer and more friendly relations with that great country."



of France's capitulation and during the days of special peril that followed. On June 15th, the *Daily Worker* pilloried British Labour leaders for "joining with U.S. reaction": the charge being that Bevin and Citrine had exchanged compliments with Green, President of the American Federation of Labour, "notoriously corrupt in its organisation", who had said that he was prepared to allow "an even 16-hour day" for an American arms programme. "Nothing is said, of course," continues the statement, in black type, "about John L. Lewis, president of the Congress of Industrial Organisations, who is opposed to the war and backed by his huge organisation, the biggest trade-union grouping in America. Lewis is by far the most powerful labour leader in America." The same John Lewis was subsequently to line up with Wendell Willkie, representative of one of the most powerful sections of American Big Business.

On June 18th, the main feature of the *Daily Worker* was an article "Bring the Guilty to Account!" of which the theme was: "It is essential to establish a Government which can save the people from the threatening disasters." *Side by side with it* were three separate "pieces" about America: "DEMAND FOR NEUTRALITY", giving "many examples of the nation-wide demand that America must keep out of the war"; "PEOPLE'S PROGRAMME FOR UNITED STATES", giving the programme of the Communist Party of the U.S.A. "to defeat American warmongers"; and "SCIENTISTS FOR STAYING OUT", stating that "the Roosevelt Administration's moves to bring America into the war were sharply criticised at the convention in New York of the Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians".

On June 19th appeared an article, under a big heading "KEEP OUT, SAY U.S. PEOPLE", of which the following are some extracts:

"The American people are continuing their determined

opposition to participation in the war, despite the war policy of the Roosevelt administration and the demand from the Right-Wing Press for immediate aid to the Allies. . . .

“Some of the anti-war sentiment is confused, and limited to the determination that American soldiers shall not be sent to foreign shores, but much of it shows a consciousness that the national defence programme is itself a step towards war.

“The Congress of Industrial Organisations (the powerful American trade union body) has not officially opposed the national defence programme. It voices opposition to the war, demands that wages and working conditions be maintained and opposes the attacks on civil liberties for aliens. But many unions and industrial councils have gone on record against the war moves.

“For example, the C.I.O. Council in Cleveland has asked Unions to vote on a resolution condemning the ‘Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies’ and reminding members of the Committee that there is nothing to prevent them from supporting their opinions by dying in the firing line for the Bank of England.

“This action has been paralleled throughout the country in union after union. . . .

“The opposition of youth is voiced in numerous petitions from student bodies as well as through the American Youth Congress.

“In various parts of the country peace ballots are being taken. In Massachusetts 98 per cent. of the industrial section was opposed to United States entry into the war.

“Congress is beginning to realise that the overwhelming majority of the American people is opposed to United States participation. The result is that there has been some stiffening of the opposition to the war moves, particularly in the Senatè.

*“Every time a Senator has made a speech urging that America keep out of the war, he has been rewarded by thousands of grateful letters. Senator Marcantonio in particular has been overwhelmed with greetings from people throughout the country for his lone dissenting vote against the President’s armament programme. [Emphasis in original.]*

“The people do not want to come into the war. They are ready to speak for peace at every opportunity. And the Communist Party is busy on the job of organising them to do something about it.”

On June 22nd, a leading article commented as follows on the nomination of Stimson and Knox to posts in the Democratic Administration:

“The American millionaires are sharpening up their knives, getting ready to plunge into war and join in the world-wide carve up. This is the meaning of the turning over the army and navy posts to the pro-war Republican leaders.

“The old party labels have lost their meaning. When the millionaires get the whiff of blood and super war-profits in their nostrils Democrats and Republicans forget their differences and unite for the big spoils which they hope the gamble in human lives will bring.

“So the Democrat Roosevelt turns out his own party men and takes in the rival Republican leaders, Knox and Stimson. Thus, a secret meeting in the White House and the entire nation is united. Oh, yeah!

“But it so happens that this announcement coincides with the news of the latest Gallup poll, which returns a 13 to 1 majority against America entering the war. There is no doubt about the meaning of this poll. The American public wants peace. . . .” [The *Daily Worker* omitted to record that the same poll showed a substantial majority

in favour of help for Britain—which depended on a rapid development of the rearmament programme.]

“Now the sharp turn in the war has forced the rulers of the United States to revise their plans. Quite new considerations have arisen. Empires are under the hammer. Now is the chance for a colonial smash and grab, in the Indies, South America, China and Africa. Weaken rival Powers by keeping them at one another’s throats and thus put Wall Street on top. Get ready to crush the new rising movement of the people in Europe.

“These are the ugly realities behind the changes in the Government of the U.S.A. The imperialist conflict for the re-division of the entire earth is threatening to engulf the new world as well as the old.”

### THE FIFTY DESTROYERS

It will be remembered that throughout the summer negotiations were proceeding between the British and U.S. Governments for the transfer to our fleet of fifty American destroyers; and all Socialists who believed that the future depended on one immediate issue—should we or should we not withstand Hitler’s onslaught?—waited in painful anxiety for the decision to be taken. For these destroyers were to make it less likely that Hitler could invade us successfully: they were to relieve the strain and danger of convoying goods to this country: they were to render the peril of our being starved into surrender less imminent. When the first week or so after the fall of France had passed without invasion, and it seemed that we had a breathing space, the transfer of these destroyers took on, in a very *special* and poignant sense, the aspect of an issue of life or death.

That is precisely why the C.P.—unerringly, on its assumptions—burst out into a *special* fury of denunciation when it was announced that the arrangement had gone through.

And for another reason also : namely, because the details of the arrangement linked the fortunes of Great Britain and the U.S.A. so firmly together that clearly America must now do everything in her power to prevent our conquest.

Here is the leading article of September 5th, in which the *Daily Worker* greeted the news. The heading "PAWNING THE EMPIRE", is at first sight, but at first sight only, an odd heading in a newspaper by no means dedicated to imperial interests :

"Selling naval bases for old destroyers does not seem a very profitable business. Most of them were marked down for the scrap yard, and even though the American hucksters now value them at £21,000,000, this is a ridiculously small sum to pay for the lease of naval bases which command the Western Atlantic.

"The Churchill Government certainly has some use for the old destroyers, but there are much bigger issues involved than this.

"The American capitalists have now enormously strengthened their position in relation to rival imperialist Powers, particularly Great Britain. The bases, now leased, were established by Britain as part of the Empire defence system. But with America muscling in a big shift takes place.

"The dollar capitalists now command the Western Atlantic and secure the release of their fleet for use in the Pacific, if necessary against Japan. They place themselves in a dominating position in relation to Canada and South America, scenes of intense economic rivalry between Britain and the U.S.A. They are making ready to grab the 'orphan colonies' of France, Holland and Belgium.

"Wall Street has got all this for 99 years 'in exchange for naval and military equipment and material which the United States will transfer to his Majesty's Government'.

“For the British people this is supposed to be an occasion of popular rejoicing. An agreement signed on the first anniversary of the war brings them destroyers ploughing through the seas. A pretty picture and nicely stage managed. But the realities are altogether different.

“The agreement means that the capitalist world has sunk deeper into war. The U.S.A., the strongest imperialist country in the world, is now wading into the carve-up and switching over to war economy. Millions of American workers and farmers are being brought face to face with the horrors of an unwanted war just as we were in September, 1939.

“Those workers and farmers wanted the influence of the new world to be used for peace. Instead, their ruling class, aflame with the lust for profit and desperate, for the second time in a generation, to reap a ghoulish harvest from the war, disease and hunger that has overtaken the old world, prepare to hurl the American people into the inferno.

“It is not open war yet. Wall Street possesses its own finesse, as was to be seen in the last war. Suck the blood of your ‘ally’ before coming to his assistance. That is the technique. Then do him down after the rescue.

“So parts of the Empire pass into pawn. Uncle Sam has got them safely up the spout. In return for his 50 destroyers he has also got a promissory note on the British Fleet, the pledge that it ‘would not be scuttled or surrendered, but sent overseas to defend other parts of the British Empire’.

“And *The Times* calls all this ‘clear signs of better days’!

“The people of Britain may well take stock of the position. Their rulers have brought them to the edge of the abyss. The war opens out on a world-wide scale, the certain prospect being that the working people of all countries will be the losers with final victory going to the most violent and

ruthless gang of imperialists, namely, the financiers of Wall Street.

“Better days? Yes, they will surely come. But only when the people of all countries take their fate into their own hands and remove from power those who have condemned humanity to a life of ‘blood, toil, tears and sweat’.”

By way of epilogue, the following paragraph appeared in the *Worker's Notebook* of the same issue :

“I met a friend yesterday who had volunteered for Navy service, been accepted, and was awaiting his call-up.

“He said, ‘I think I shall revise the terms—I want a provision that I shan’t go to sea in one of those old American ships.’”

## EIRE

To anticipate, what applies to American aid applies also to the use of the Eire bases. When summer had ended and autumn was passing into winter, the Nazi submarine peril threatened us with imminent disaster. Our shipping losses rose to a rate of between five and six million tons a year. *Time*—the immediate defeat of this menace—was everything. In this situation, defensists would naturally make a supreme effort to come to an arrangement with Eire for the use of her Atlantic bases: no less naturally, defeatists would make a supreme effort to prevent their use.

So Mr. Churchill’s speech to Parliament on November 5th was described by the *Daily Worker* of the 7th as “full of menaces to the neutrality of Eire”; and “Our Diplomatic Correspondent” wrote on November 9th as follows, under the heading “IRELAND WILL NOT LEASE BASES”:

“With Roosevelt nicely safe again at the White House, certain quarters in London are suggesting that there should be a joint Anglo-American move to ‘persuade’ Eire to

restore to the use of the British navy those bases which were returned to her in 1938.

“These suggestions were multiplied yesterday following De Valera’s defence of Eire’s neutrality in the Dail on Thursday. . . .

“This new crisis in Anglo-Irish relations follows the attack on Eire’s neutrality by Mr. Churchill in his review of the war situation in the House of Commons on Tuesday. It has since been aggravated by a strong anti-Eire Press campaign and by the clamour of Labour M.P.’s for ‘action’ against Eire.”

On November 26th, under heading “NEUTRAL EIRE THREATENED”:

“A statement in the main front-page article of the *Daily Express* yesterday that the R.A.F. raids over the week-end on French ports defeated ‘an attempt to invade Eire and seize naval bases there’, is giving rise to more fears for Eire’s neutrality.

“The open drive to involve Eire in the war began with Mr. Churchill’s speech to Parliament on November 5, when, in view of increased German U-boat activity based on French ports, he complained that the Eire Government was denying the British Navy the use of naval bases which were available in the 1914–18 war to end the danger of blockade.

“At once, in spite of a flat refusal by President de Valera to compromise Eire neutrality by allowing Britain to use the ports, a whole spate of propaganda was set in motion ranging from bloodthirsty demands for direct seizure of the ports to suggestions of diplomatic ‘pressure’ to achieve the extension of the war to Eire.

“One of the most ‘popular’ means of paving the way for such an extension has been that of playing up the danger of a German invasion of Eire.



"The question being asked yesterday was whether the *Daily Express* article was 'provocation' of this kind or based on official estimates of the danger of an invasion. . . .

"If it is the official view that the week-end's raids really did disperse a fleet assembled to attack Eire, then the *Express* was the only newspaper to get the information. If the *Express* story is based on non-official information it is important to know the source, since the article goes further than anything yet in the way of stimulating British 'anticipatory' action against the Eire ports.

"It is significant that the *Express's* stable companion, the *Sunday Express*, was busy over the week-end demanding a 'real' British attack on Italy, instead of what was alleged to be a 'strange reluctance' to injure Italy.

"Both papers, concentrating on opposite ends of Europe, appear to be involved in a joint campaign to extend the war."

And on December 9th, under heading "NEW ATTEMPTS TO GET EIRE BASES":

"Strong hints of a new attempt by the British Government to get a grip on the bases of neutral Eire are circulating in London. In many circles it is believed that a new 'Irish crisis' is imminent.

"And there seems to be good ground for the suspicion that the American Government is going to be approached, or has actually been approached, to help 'squeeze' the Eire Government.

"Startling evidence that something of this kind is going on was given in a statement. . . .

"It is no secret that Mr. Winston Churchill himself is in charge of the anti-submarine campaign. And it was his complaint about the neutrality of the Eire bases in the Commons on November 5 which first disclosed the desires of the British Government. . . .

“Then came rumours of an attempt by the British Government to have the Canadian Government approach the Government of Eire with an offer to lease the bases—and the proposal was openly made in the Canadian House of Commons by the Conservative leader, Mr. Hanson.

“At the same time the German official News Agency declared in Berlin that ‘rumours abroad that Churchill is considering violation of Eire’s neutrality have not remained unobserved here’.”

CHAPTER III  
THE AMERICAN QUESTION

By JOHN STRACHEY

*August, 1940*

THE MOST IMPORTANT part of Mr. Churchill's speech of August 24th last was his reference to America. There was a prospect, he said, of the fortunes of the United States and of Great Britain becoming increasingly mixed up together. In this phrase, and in the passages of the speech which surrounded it, Mr. Churchill suddenly called attention to the dominant factor in the present world situation. Upon the American question—upon the question, that is to say, of the relationship of the United States of America, potentially the most powerful State in the world, to the other States of the world, and to the British nation in particular—hangs the future.

Mr. Churchill, when he said that the affairs of Britain and America might become increasingly mixed up together, was speaking not merely of a prospect. He was describing a process; he was describing a process which was already well under way in the weeks immediately proceeding the writing of this article, the last weeks of August. A British Dominion, Canada, participating actively in the present war, has had what are in fact Staff conversations with the United States. At the same time it has been announced that numerous crucially important points in British possessions in the Caribbean, and in the Western Hemisphere generally, are to be leased to America as naval bases. Thirdly, an active struggle is going on in the United States over the question of whether fifty destroyers belonging to the United States

navy are or are not to be put at the disposal of the British Government for the prosecution of the war against Germany. Before this article is read this controversy will no doubt have been decided, and, it seems probable, will have been decided in a sense favourable to the despatch of the destroyers.

In America political controversy centres on whether or not these moves in the "mixing-up-together" process will or will not lead to American participation in the present war against Germany. No one, of course, now in this country who is in favour of resistance to the bid of Nazi imperialism to conquer the world can pretend that he is indifferent to the question of whether or not the most powerful State in the world will, in arms, resist that bid. But the Nazis can be resisted in various ways. It is undeniable that in what may be called the middle perspective—in the perspective of the next year or so, that is to say—the question of whether America does or does not declare war on Germany is of an importance that cannot be exaggerated. Curiously enough, however, both for the short perspective—for the perspective of the next few months—and for the perspective of the next few decades, this is not the most important question. In the next few months the most important question is that of the actual volume of material American assistance to this country: the question of the number of planes which are sold, the number of ships which may be sent, the amount of armament and supplies of all sorts which may be obtained. Nor is it clear that a declaration of war would be of decisive assistance in this respect. Again, looking to the decades rather than to the months or years, what has begun to foreshadow itself, both by the acts of Anglo-American co-operation which have already taken place, and still more in the perspective which these acts and the British Prime Minister's references to them open up, is a form of co-operation more important, in the long run, than the working

alliance which would automatically occur should America declare war on Germany.

Such alliances for the purpose of waging a particular war are, of course, a commonplace in the relationship of States. Capitalist Empires, in particular, have made such temporary, *ad hoc*, war alliances again and again. They have by no means signified any lasting co-operation between the two allied Powers; still less have they signified any real cordiality in their relationships. But what people, both here and in the United States, feel, rather than consciously think, today is that there is a possibility different from, more significant and more interesting than, any such alliance. People feel that there is a possibility of long-term, permanent and slowly-growing co-operation between the United States and the British Empire. It is the purpose of this article to examine the question of whether or not this feeling is necessarily an illusion, as at first sight most Marxists, for example, would certainly say that it must be. Is it or is it not conceivable that two of the most formidable capitalist Empires in the world can reach a basis for long-term co-operation? If it is conceivable, is it desirable? And, if it is both conceivable and desirable, what practical steps would have to be taken in each of these Empires to make it come to pass?

### DO WE WANT AMERICAN CO-OPERATION?

First of all, however, I must take up the simple and immediate issue of whether or not we should welcome or deplore the present tendency for American assistance to Britain to grow. This tendency carries with it the possibility that such assistance will grow into an actual American declaration of war. Naturally our answer to this question will depend entirely upon our general attitude to the war. Those of us who believe that the Nazis must be resisted will welcome American help in resisting them. Those people

who are not in favour of resisting the Nazis, so long, at any rate, as the present Government is in power in Britain, and those who have not made up their minds upon the point, will take an opposite view. People's attitude to the question of American help to, and co-operation with, this country will prove, in the coming period, an excellent test of what is a man's, or a party's, real opinion on the question of whether or not the Nazis should be resisted. All those men and parties who at heart do not care whether what has happened to the French people should happen to the British people; all those who have persuaded themselves that they do not care whether the Nazis, by a conquest of this country, shall establish securely their Empire over the whole of Western and Central Europe; all those who do not realise that the establishment of such a Nazi European Empire would be followed by a Nazi attack upon America or the Soviet Union, or ultimately both, with the possibility that such an attack would succeed and that the Nazis would impose their empire and their ideals on the world as a whole—all such people, but only such people, will show themselves hostile to an increasing volume of American assistance to this country.<sup>1</sup>

Let us be frank. A steadily increasing volume of such American assistance to this country, of which a declaration of war on Germany might or might not be a part, affords the real prospect of breaking the Nazi bid for world power. It is always difficult in time of war to preserve a balanced view of the military situation. Today there seems a danger of a reaction of relief from the desperation of our peril at the end of June last. We are apt to feel so relieved that it

<sup>1</sup> The whole of this paragraph, and the words "do not care" in particular, as well as some other statements in this chapter, must be read side by side with the explanation of defeatism given in Chapter I, and, especially, Chapter IV. No Communist "does not care" whether what has happened to the French people should happen to us; but (a) he cares for it far less than for his plan to create international revolution by means of defeatism, and (b) he has persuaded himself that defeatism is the best way to prevent what has happened to France happening to us.

has, apparently, proved impracticable for Hitler to assault these islands by direct military invasion (though by the time these words are read the attempt may still have been made), and that his air assault appears to be suffering serious reverses, that the real situation to which those who ruled them between the two wars have led the British people is becoming forgotten in a new access of our national be-setting sin of complacency.

And yet it is fantastic that one can even dream of mentioning such a word as complacency, in view of what really faces us in the approaching months and years. Let us write of that situation frankly. Even though it proves quite impossible for Hitler to take these islands by assault, the fact remains that the British people of forty-five millions, enjoying the valuable, but not decisive, help of the Dominions, face the German people of eighty millions, equipped with incomparably the greatest war machine in modern times, and having subjugated the other peoples of Western Europe, and added their industrial potential to the German war machine. It is not courage, it is mere foolishness, to suppose that the Nazi will to subjugate the world can be, not merely checked, but finally broken (as it must be broken, if sooner or later it is not to end the independent existence of the British, American and all other unsubjugated peoples), except by means of an ever-broadening stream of American assistance to this country. That is why, I repeat, the attitude of men and parties to the American question will reveal decisively their real hopes and fears in regard to the war.

Those whose real dread is a Nazi defeat, and a consequent victory for Great Britain, will oppose every extension of American assistance. And let us make no mistake about it. A Nazi defeat, and a consequent British victory, are precisely what a certain school of thought in this country really dreads. This is not an accusation, nor an insult. It is a mere statement of admitted fact. For example, Dr. John Lewis

said as much, with great clarity, in an article which he contributed, by invitation, to the *Left News* last month, and in which he defended the "line" of the French and British Communists. By far the most revealing sentence in that article is the one in which Dr. Lewis wrote: "If they (the governing class of this country) win the war nothing can save the British people from fascism." The more we reflect on that sentence, the more revealing it becomes. We see that Dr. Lewis, and those who think like him, do not feel that the main and immediate danger of the establishment of fascism in Britain consists in the possibility of the defeat and subjugation of Britain by the Nazis. All France has been divided into two parts, the one ruled directly by the German Fascists, and the other ruled indirectly by the German Fascists and directly by the native French puppet Fascists at Vichy. This insignificant little event, consisting in the double subjugation of the French people to fascism, as a direct result of their defeat by the Nazis, has made not the slightest impression on Dr. Lewis. Writing immediately after this event, he solemnly warns us that the danger of the establishment of fascism here resides in the possibility of a British victory; he warns us, that is to say, that we shall get fascism if we do *not* let ourselves be subjugated by the Nazis! Writing when the British people were beset and beleaguered, as they still are, by the relentless assault of the German Fascists; writing when they stood in daily and hourly peril from that assault, Dr. Lewis reveals that he is wholly preoccupied with the danger that, in the event of our preventing the German Fascists from subjugating us, we should succumb to a native British fascism!

People who can write like that must have wholly and totally lost their heads. Loss of sense of proportion and reality could not go farther. Nobody is suggesting, of course, that in the remote possibility of a total and world-wide victory for British imperialism there would not be the further



possibility of an attempt on the part of the British imperialists to set up a Fascist régime in this country. All things are possible in human life. But that the opportunity for such an attempt should arise, that the attempt should be made if the opportunity did arise, that, finally, if the opportunity arose and the attempt were made, the attempt should succeed, are, taken together, an hypothesis of extreme remoteness. And yet this is what Dr. Lewis tells us that he is worrying about. This is what he was worrying about in the middle of the summer of 1940, when the Nazi knife was at his silly throat.

Fatuousness of this order of magnitude does not arise, especially in well-informed and well-trained minds like Dr. Lewis's, without a reason. And the reason is, of course, that he and his friends have performed the astonishing feat of persuading themselves that British imperialism is, almost literally, the sole formidable reactionary force in the world; that Nazi imperialism is either not very strong or not very reactionary (sometimes they imply one, sometimes the other of these unfortunately equally false hypotheses); and that consequently anything, such as increasing American assistance, which strengthens British imperialism is to be deplored. As anyone who has not gone dizzy (though not, to be sure, with success, but with political contortions) can see from one glance at the world situation, British imperialism is neither so strong, nor anything like so reactionary, as Nazi imperialism. The possibility of a total and annihilating world victory for British imperialism is (whether we think this fact fortunate or unfortunate) more remote than the possibility of an annihilating world victory for Nazi imperialism. The consequences of such a total British victory, even if it took place, would be incomparably less reactionary (they might not be, if we all did our jobs well enough, reactionary at all). Therefore, an ever-increasing flow of American assistance to Britain is to be whole-

heartedly welcomed and encouraged, as a pre-requisite to the salvation of the world from Nazi domination.

### AMERICAN MOTIVES

All this does not mean that we should have illusions about the motives which are actuating the American Government, and ruling circles in America generally, in increasing the volume of their assistance to this country, or the motive which would actuate them in the event of their declaring war on Germany. On the contrary, it is our duty as Socialists to analyse the world situation as calmly, coldly and realistically as we are able. The more we are tossed and tumbled in the tumultuous waves of this second world conflict, the more it is our duty to strive to keep our heads and see things as they are.

The motives which are actuating the American Government in assisting the British Government seem to me to be as follows: First the American Government fears the Nazi imperialists. They believe, and they are right, that if the Nazis succeed in completing and establishing their conquest of the Old World, by means of the subjugation of the British Isles, they will become a deadly menace to the United States. This simple motive of self-preservation is the strongest influence in America today. On the whole, and above all, America is helping us, and may fight on our side, from the simple, natural and, to my mind, wholly justified, motive of self-preservation. In one aspect, but not the decisively important aspect today, this may no doubt be called the expression of an American imperialist antagonism to German imperialism. But what will be the consequence to the world if this motive of self-preservation amongst the American governing class, and, for that matter, the American people generally, is overruled? Let us reflect on what will happen if, as a substantial minority of American opinion of all classes desires, assistance to this country is so largely with-

held that in the long run a Nazified Europe is able to wear down and to bear down British resistance. Let us reflect upon what will happen if we suffer the fate of France, and the Nazis become the rulers of all Central and Western Europe. Can there be any doubt that, if this should take place, any American Government which had allowed it to take place would hasten to come to terms with the Nazis? The American isolationists, who would have imposed such a policy on their country, and who would therefore be in power, would, in the nature of things, have to hasten to do a Munich on a world scale, a Munich which would make the Czech deal of 1938 seem like a Nazi defeat. Indeed, it is almost impossible to see how anything could possibly result from the joint triumph of the isolationists in America, and Hitler in Europe, except a deal by which, for the time being, Hitler did one of his periodic renunciations and left America in the control of the Western Hemisphere, thus bringing into his hands the unchallenged control of much of the rest of the world.

I suppose we shall be told that such a development would be no threat to the existence of the Soviet Union; that the German-Soviet Pact of 1939 would provide perfect security to the Soviet Union against the attack of a Nazi empire which had subdued all Europe, including Britain, and which had come to a complete working agreement with the United States. The fact is, of course, that once world development had taken this path, a Nazi domination of the Soviet Union would become inevitable. Is this really what we should work with Father Coughlan, the American Fascists and the old guard of the Republican Party, to achieve?

The second motive which actuates the American Government, and wide sections of the American people, in assisting us is the fact that Great Britain and the United States are today countries of a similar kind. They are, that is to say, capitalist democracies. They differ widely in many of their

institutions, habits of mind and ways of life. Nevertheless, as compared to their differences with countries of a different kind—e.g., Socialist countries such as the Soviet Union, or Fascist countries such as Germany—they are similar; and this similarity breeds genuine sympathy and an impulse towards mutual assistance. Again, in the special case of Britain and America, a common language and a common racial origin (it should be needless to say that I do not mean racial in the Nazi pseudo-scientific sense, but simply that the ancestors of the most important section of the American people came from the British Isles) increase this tendency. It is just as unrealistic to ignore this ideological and, in the best sense of that word, sentimental factor in the situation as to suppose that this is the basic factor. It is not the basic factor; nevertheless, if, in an attempt to be “scientific”, “hard-boiled” and all the rest of it, we ignore it, we shall end up by being neither “scientific” nor “hard-boiled”, but, quite simply, wrong. Ideological and mental facts are facts. They have their own weight, which has to be assessed as accurately as we can. To ignore them and to pretend they are not there because they are mental facts is to be grossly mechanistic.

The third reason which actuates the American Government is a desire on the part of American capitalists and, I think it is true to say, certain sections of the American people, to assume a leading rôle in the world. The United States is potentially the most powerful State in the world, and her great industrialists, bankers and, for that matter, a good many other Americans in a humbler position, would like to enjoy those profits, privileges, fields of investment, assured access to raw materials, opportunities to exploit subject peoples, prestige, honours and glories—in a word, those usual imperialist advantages—which the assumption of a leading place in the world would undoubtedly give them. This is the positive side of American imperialism.

For the moment, and on the whole, this impulse towards American world leadership motivates the American Government in favour of helping Great Britain and opposing Nazi Germany. For American imperialist statesmen, not having become bereft, like some people, of common understanding, can see that Nazi imperialism, far more than British imperialism, is their most dangerous rival today. But, of course, it is quite true that in other circumstances and in a new situation this motive may turn the other way and tend to impel the American Government to oppose Great Britain.

In real life, of course, all these three motives are inextricably inter-connected. But their net result has been, so far at any rate, slowly, with difficulty, and encountering heavy internal opposition from a minority which they do not affect, to cause the American Government to give an increasing flow of assistance to Great Britain.

### THE INTERNAL STRUGGLE IN AMERICA

Let us now look into the internal American situation today. For the present tendency to increase assistance to, and co-operation with, this country is the result of the balance of forces in America. There are plenty of people with plenty of influence in the United States who, for one reason or another, are against the giving of that increasing assistance and co-operation. In this connection also a grossly distorted and over-simplified picture is being presented by Communist writers. We are told that the whole American governing class has now become one solid reactionary bloc, intent on "dragging America into the war" and pursuing a policy of black reaction at home. In particular we are told that Roosevelt and the New Dealers, who have just reasserted their position in the Democratic Party, have done a complete *volte face*; that whereas they were up to the war a progressive force (this can hardly be denied, as they were actively and warmly supported by the Communist Party

of the United States), they have now become the leaders of American reaction ; that "the New Deal is being dismantled" ; that all its beneficial reforms are being repealed ; that a repressive and persecuting régime, no whit, it is implied, better than that of the Gestapo, is being established throughout the Union. All this is the merest vapourings. The truth is that the main body of the American capitalist class is at the moment bitterly attacking Roosevelt and the New Dealers for their refusal, the capitalists say, to modify the New Deal even in the slightest degree. The Roosevelt administration is accused of refusing to modify one of its reforms, even when some of the New Deal measures are said to be standing in the way of National Defence preparations. This accusation is itself an exaggeration, of course.

There does exist a formidable reactionary trend in America today, such as usually occurs after a great forward surge of the progressive forces, of the kind that has taken place in America during the past eight years. Some of the New Deal reforms are in danger of emasculation at the hand of Congress. But it is not true that Roosevelt and the New Dealers are leading and encouraging this reactionary drive. On the contrary, they are putting up the only effective opposition to it. It is very difficult to follow closely the ebb and flow of this struggle from across the Atlantic, but, on the whole, the prospects of preserving the main progressive achievements of the two Roosevelt administrations appear to be good if—but only if—the New Dealers retain power. The Labour Relations, or Wagner, Act, which is the effective charter of Trades Unionism in America, the vital Act under the ægis of which, it is hardly too much to say, the great C.I.O. Unions have been built up, is in danger. The Smith Bill has, as I write, passed one House of Congress, but not the other, and this Bill, unless amendments, which are under discussion at present, are passed, would seriously diminish the efficacy of the protection which the C.I.O. Unions enjoy under the

Wagner Act. This is true. But it is not by rounding on the very forces which passed the Wagner Act, and which are at present defending it, and calling them "the spearhead of American reaction", that this vitally important enactment will be preserved. A similar struggle is being waged around many of the other social reforms of the New Deal period, the Wages and Hours Act, the various social insurance Acts, and such matters. It is impossible in this country to follow the details of the struggles over each of these measures. But one thing is certain: the American Fascists, the Coughlanites, the old guard of the Republican Party and the other isolationist forces are not the people who will save these measures.

The other and, to my mind, more important side of the New Deal programme consisted in the so-called "lend-*spend*" measures, by which it was sought to keep up the level of employment. What has happened in this case is that the Government borrowing and expenditure have been switched from public works to armament production. The economic effects will be very similar. It makes very little difference whether you spend a billion dollars on roads, bridges and parkways, or on battleships and aircraft. A similar number of men, dollar for dollar, will be employed. A similar amount of new purchasing power will be put into the hands of the population. A similar amount of indirect employment will be given, by repercussion, as this new money comes to be spent. It is pure nonsense to suggest that, while the New Deal public works expenditure was beneficial and raised the standard of life, the present expenditure on armaments will decrease the standard of life.

The difference between the two objects of expenditure is, of course, that for the present programme you will get battleships and bombers instead of bridges and parkways. But the bridges and parkways were never the important thing about the lend-*spend* programme. The important

thing was the indirect effect on purchasing power which the expenditure had. Men, and political parties, will, of course, approve or disapprove of the switching of expenditure to armament-building, according to whether they approve or disapprove of the United States Government appeasing the Nazi imperialists. Only those who are at heart in favour of the United States doing a gigantic world deal with the Nazis have the right to oppose American re-armament. For unless America re-arms, it is perfectly obvious that she will have to come to terms with the Nazis. I ask every member of both the British and American Communist Parties this question: are they or are they not in favour of the United States Government coming to terms with the Nazis? If they are not in favour of it, do they deny the necessity of the American people having arms available with which to defend themselves against Nazi attack? This is an even simpler question than the question of American assistance to, and co-operation with, this country. For the American people will still need arms—indeed, they will need ten times as many arms—if the Nazis are enabled by American isolationism to conquer this country.

### THE SNAPPING OF THE LINKS

We shall be told, of course, that the American people are being led by Mr. Roosevelt, not to oppose Nazi imperialism, but towards aggression on behalf of American imperialism, or on behalf of a joint Anglo-American imperialism. In particular, we shall be told that the point of American preparedness propaganda is directed not only—and some would continue, though quite untruly, not principally—against Nazi imperialism, but against the Soviet Union. Now it is, unfortunately, quite true that there is plenty of anti-Sovietism in the United States at the present moment. Not so much the Soviet-Nazi Pact in itself as the world policy of the Communist International, as applied by the Com-



munist Party of the United States, has given a golden opportunity for the mobilisation of American opinion against the Soviet Union.

By far the most startling example of this process is afforded by the news that the United Auto Workers of America have just passed an anti-Soviet resolution. To anyone who knows the history of this great, vigorous and successful trade union, this is startling news. It is not too much to say that up till quite recently the Communist Party of America had a predominating influence in this great new Union. A bitter internal struggle was fought out between a body of able, responsible and vigorous leaders, some of whom were members of the Communist Party, and almost all of whom were in close accord with that party, and the Secretary of the Union, Mr. Homer Martin. Homer Martin had fallen under the influence of Lovestone, an ex-member of the American Communist Party, who, over ten years ago, split away and became one of that Party's bitterest, most unscrupulous and most unjustified enemies. This struggle ended with the defeat of Homer Martin, and it seemed clear that the Communist International had managed to secure what it has always lacked in all the countries of the West, a predominating influence in at least one genuine mass organisation.

Indeed, no success could have been more important than the securing of an influential position in the United Auto Workers. The American automobile industry is the greatest and largest industry in the world. The Auto Workers' Union may well become the greatest trade union in the world. It was a fact of world significance that the best, most capable, most honest and most courageous leaders of the Auto Workers were either Communists or followed the Communist lead. The passage of this anti-Soviet resolution by the United Auto Workers must, I presume (unless—which is possible, though it seems unlikely—further news should

modify the significance of the event), mean that this influence has been destroyed. Here is a most serious confirmation of the warning that some of us have repeatedly given in the past months. We have said that, whatever were the arguments by which the present line of the Communist International might be justified, it would end by snapping the slowly growing links between the Communist Parties of the Western nations and the working masses of those nations. No warning has been more totally disregarded nor more violently denied than this. Yet here we find the snapping of what was, on the whole, the most important link which the C.I. had established with a mass organisation in the West.

And yet I feel confident that this event also will be totally disregarded. I foretell that those of us who point out what is happening will be violently attacked for doing so. It will be said that we are supporting the United Auto Workers in their anti-Soviet line, and glorying in the adoption of that line. I take this opportunity of refuting, in advance, this allegation. I deplore the passing of this resolution by the United Auto Workers. I am here pointing out that the disastrous effects, which I foretold, of the present world line of the Communist International are now becoming apparent. It is, of course, open to the supporters of the present line of the Communist International to say that these consequences, by way of the snapping of links with great mass organisations such as the United Auto Workers, are the inevitable price which has to be paid for a correct world line. I do not in the least agree with this view; but it is, at any rate, a comprehensible one. But for goodness' sake do not let anyone say any longer that a price has not been paid, or that these links are not being snapped.

I am not for a moment suggesting that these deplorable events should make us disregard or minimise the strength of the reactionary drive in the United States at the present

time. The lesson they should teach us is that today, more than ever before, that reactionary drive can only be met by a policy based on a People's Front conception—by the unity of all American progressive forces, including the New Dealers. If we are told that the New Dealers are no longer a progressive force, but that, on the contrary, it is the isolationists, from Father Coughlan to the old guard of the Republican Party, who are today objectively the progressives, then I must say that people who can take such a view show that they are no longer able to distinguish healthy from diseased elements in public life.

### THE THEORETICAL LESSON

There is a vital theoretical lesson to be drawn from the present phase of growing Anglo-American co-operation. As to the fact of that growing co-operation there is, after all, no dispute. Indeed, Communists actually exaggerate the extent of that co-operation when they are denouncing it as an attempt to drag the American people into war. But the very existence of this tendency towards co-operation of a long-term kind, involving such measures as a willingness on the part of British imperialism to (in fact) cede naval bases all over the Caribbean to America, and thus permanently alter the balance of power between the two empires, is a challenge to our thinking. This tendency towards something more significant than the usual temporary war alliance between two empires ought to lead us to a careful re-examination of our analysis of the world situation. It has been a foundation stone of recent Marxist analysis, a foundation stone the laying of which is particularly associated with the name of R. P. Dutt, that on the whole the most important factor in the world situation, the factor which underlay everything else, was the antagonism between the American and British Empires. These, it was argued, were the two dominating capitalist world Powers. Therefore it

was inevitable that they should be rivals. They were the greatest world Powers; therefore their antagonism and rivalry would be the greatest and the deepest. It is hardly too much to say that much of the world outlook and the world policy of the Communist International has been based upon this view. Anglo-German rivalry was seen as, on the whole, something subsidiary to it, as something which would be resolved without final conflict. Anglo-German antagonism would be resolved without decisive conflict not only because of the British desire for a common front against the Soviet Union, but also because of the British desire for a common front against the United States. It was felt that all English-speaking-union talk, all talk of a community of interests between Britain and America was, so long as they remained capitalist empires, absurd nonsense. It was felt that the one thing which could not happen was any significant degree of Anglo-American co-operation.

Well, it is simply not working out that way. The Anglo-German antagonism was not superseded and overshadowed. It did produce decisive conflict. Antagonism between the British and American Empires, while real enough, has not resulted in decisive conflict, and has not made impossible a growing degree of co-operation. All this does not in the least invalidate the basic Marxist view that rival capitalist empires cannot finally solve their antagonisms until and unless they cease to be rival capitalist empires. Unquestionably this is the case. But it does mean that we have slipped up in the supremely difficult task of applying this general theory to the immense complexities of the present world situation. There is nothing very surprising about that. Marxism, as Marxists always stress, is not some rule of thumb by means of which all the answers can be found by looking them up at the end of the book. Marxism is a guide to action; but it is a guide which does not relieve us of the duty and necessity to show the greatest discrimination and

care in its application. We now see that it was an over-simplified, mechanistic view to suppose that, because Britain and America were the two greatest capitalist empires, their antagonism must be the greatest and deepest and must govern the general world situation.

It is neither surprising nor alarming that such mistakes should be made. But what is alarming is to notice that there is not the slightest sign of any recognition of a need to revise former views in this connection. It is not, I repeat, that the fact of growing Anglo-American co-operation is denied. Communist spokesmen indeed stress this fact. But it is stressed merely to be denounced with a special venom. One almost gets the impression that leading spokesmen of the International regard the signs of the growing Anglo-American co-operation as something specially outrageous, because unnatural; as something that ought not to have the audacity to take place, because they have consistently denied that it ever could take place; as something positively scandalous which must be stopped at all costs in order to make the facts conform to their theory.

A sufficiently objective and careful application of the fundamental Marxist-Leninist theory of inter-imperial antagonisms to the present phase of growing Anglo-American co-operation would not, however, reveal a conflict between theory and practice. But what it would reveal is a profound conflict between the facts of world development and an increasing tendency to over-simplify, mechanise, and therefore debase, the theory of inter-imperialist antagonisms. All that present events show, so far at any rate, is that even so important and profound an antagonism as that between the British and American Empires can be over-ruled at a specific, and all-important, time by other factors. Anglo-American antagonism, which, of course, exists, and always must exist so long as both communities are profit-seeking, class-dominated capitalist empires, has been pushed into

the background for the moment by the factors which I have mentioned above. It has been pushed into the background partly by other inter-imperialist antagonisms, such as both the British and American fear of the Nazi imperialists, and also of the Japanese imperialists. The possibility of this sort of criss-crossing of imperialist antagonism is, of course, fully admitted in theory, though it has been seriously overlooked in practice in this case. But there are other factors at work here. It is a crass error, I repeat, to neglect the ideological factors, the factors which tend towards Anglo-American co-operation and which render latent the basic antagonism between the interests of British capital and American capital.

Unless these factors are seen and given their full importance, our estimate of the resolution of forces goes astray, and we begin to make errors in our attempt to predict the actual trend of events and to base our policy upon that trend.

### **A PEOPLE'S AMERICA AND A PEOPLE'S BRITAIN**

Such is the main theoretical lesson to be learnt from the present development in Anglo-American relations. The short-run practical deduction to be made by all those who wish to prevent the total victory of Nazi imperialism, the subjugation of Europe, and probably of the world, to the Nazi ideology, is to welcome the growth of Anglo-American co-operation as a simple necessity for the independent existence of the two peoples today. That will not blind us to the remote, theoretical, but yet possible, danger that at some time in the future there may be an attempt on the part of a joint Anglo-American imperialism to impose a reactionary régime on the world after a total victory over its imperialist rivals. Such a danger is conceivable; but to compare it to the danger of a total Nazi conquest of the world today is ludicrous. To be frank, it seems to me

decidedly premature to speculate about the world situation which would arise in the event of an Anglo-American victory. Anglo-American co-operation has to be developed in the face of enormous difficulties very much farther than it has gone at present, and then the actual breaking of the power of Nazi imperialism has to take place before those chickens can be hatched. And I for one have little disposition to begin counting them now. But if there are people who are nervous lest the chickens of such a victory should turn into imperialist eagles, let them consider two points.

First, in the event of the breaking of the Nazi will to dominate the world, and if in the process both British and American imperialism remain unmodified, then the antagonism between them would undoubtedly reappear very strongly. It really would be to throw the baby of the irrefutable Marxist analysis of world affairs out with the bath-water of the mechanistic over-simplification of that theory, to suggest that in those circumstances the British and American imperialists could easily and simply establish a world condominium; that they would not find themselves to be rivals as well as allies.

But the second consideration is much the more important. The real point is that it is both grossly unscientific and grossly defeatist to consider either America or Britain as static, unchangeable, capitalist world empires. To do so would be a cardinal instance of that failure which Marxists rightly denounce so often—a failure to see history dynamically and as a process, in its becoming rather than in its being. Of course, Britain and America are capitalist world empires, but they need not remain so. The balance of class forces within them is not fixed for all time. It is changing before our eyes, despite all difficulties, setbacks and disasters. The people's struggle within Britain and America provides the real way out for the British and American peoples.

Nor is there anything whatever in an ever-increasing degree of Anglo-American co-operation which need weaken that people's struggle. On the contrary, such increasing co-operation can be made enormously to strengthen and re-invigorate the people's forces on both sides of the Atlantic. What we have to do is to make use of the fact that the ruling classes of Britain and America have been driven, by no means entirely voluntarily, to promote a closer understanding between Britain and America. If the popular forces are strong enough, that co-operation can become a co-operation of the British and American peoples for their peaceful and progressive ends, instead of a co-operation between British and American capitalist imperialism for ends of joint aggression and domination. Of course, there is no guarantee that such a people's struggle will win; there never is; but that is the one road that leads forward.

To overlook these possibilities of change and modification in the balance of class forces, in the economic structures, and therefore in the very natures of Britain and America, is to fall into a basic error from the effects of which, I am every day more convinced, the working-class cause all over the world today is suffering. It is to fall into the error of slurring over the differences between the capitalist democracies and the Fascist dictatorships. This error arises from a gross under-estimation of fascism. It arises from an under-estimation both of the strength and of the vileness of fascism. It was precisely this error which crippled and brought to nought the struggle of the German Communist Party before 1933. (And if anyone tells me that in saying this I am "putting the blame" for the rise of Hitler on the German Communists instead of on the German Social Democrats, or excusing the poltroonery and turpitude of the Social Democrats in any way, or denying the gallantry and admirable intentions of the German Communists, I can only say that such people are either unwilling to understand, or incapable



of understanding, plain English. For this, of course, is what is being said in connection with recent discussions over the French Communist Party. Anyone who suggests that it is now obvious that the French Communist Party made a fatal mistake in adopting its anti-war line is accused of apologising for Pétain, or, at any rate, for Blum.)

Now, we have seen precisely the same madness projected on a world scale. Just as we were told before 1933 that the Nazis could not take power, that if they did take power they could solve none of Germany's economic problems, that consequently they would hold power only for a few months, so now we are being told that the Nazis' bid for world domination cannot possibly succeed, that the Nazis cannot establish a world reactionary régime, etc., etc. Political parties, it has been well said, never learn anything from their mistakes. They relapse into mere fury when these mistakes are pointed out to them. But parties, as well as species, which learn nothing from experience become extinct.

At any rate, those of us who are determined to learn from experience before it is too late are no longer willing, as we have been for all too long, to be guided by men who, however brilliant, have, experience has now shown, a fundamentally distorted view of the world situation. We must make up our minds, above all, about this American question. For the American question is undoubtedly fundamental to the whole world situation. For my part, I have not the slightest hesitation in concluding that an ever-increasing degree of Anglo-American co-operation, while it will, like everything else in this world, bring its own dangers with it, will bring not only indispensable help in resisting the Nazi assault, but also vast new allies to the British people's struggle. New, vigorous, rising working-class and popular forces exist in the United States. Our imperative duty is not to attempt to

prevent the growth of Anglo-American co-operation, but to co-ordinate these American popular forces with our own, so that as the process of mixing up together takes place it will be, not the capital, but the peoples, of Britain and America, who clasp hands.

NOTE IV

*THE BOMBING OF LONDON*

THE INTENSIVE BOMBING of London, which started on September 7th, provided the opportunity for a new phase of Communist tactics, though of course this and the previous phase overlapped. The "Men of Munich" campaign gave way to one in which exploitation of the horror, danger and discomfort of war was the dominant note. Parallel with this campaign, or rather part of it, was the movement for a "People's Convention", which developed out of preliminary work done during the "Men of Munich" period, and was launched by a Manifesto in the *Daily Worker* on September 28th. This Manifesto is printed as Appendix IV.

CHAPTER IV

REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM AND ITS  
DEVELOPMENT IN C.P. POLICY

By VICTOR GOLLANCZ

January, 1941

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED DURING the last three months, and particularly during the last month, has made three things clear: (a) many rank-and-file members of the C.P. (and many more of those who, without being members, consciously or unconsciously follow the C.P. lead) still have no idea what "revolutionary defeatism" is: (b) many who know, or who learn for the first time, what it is, indignantly deny that this is the policy of the Communist Party: (c) such people do not begin to understand that the "People's Convention" is a stage in the development of the "revolutionary defeatist" campaign.

Three examples: (1) A C.P. member writes, "I still respect you: <sup>1</sup> I will not therefore vilify you, as you vilify us by calling us defeatist" (whereas a Communist who really understands his own policy, and has accepted it with all its implications, must regard the term "defeatist" as one of the highest honour): (2) A near-C.P.-er writes: "Surely you can't really believe that the C.P. is stirring up strife in the factories? That would help Hitler to win": (3) An eminent signatory to the "People's Convention" wrote privately the other day: "We rejoice hourly in Italy's plight and our successes";<sup>2</sup> and another signatory, Aleck Bourne, the famous surgeon, wrote to the *Daily Worker*—and the *Daily Worker* printed it—that "if he

<sup>1</sup> This was a "deviation" on his part.

<sup>2</sup> See the Foreword, page vii.

suspected the Convention to be an *anti-war movement* [my italics] which would interfere with a complete victory over fascism he would not be supporting it in any way". One doesn't have to be gifted with second sight to see the expression on the face of Mr. Dutt when he and the other C.P. organisers of the "Convention" read, and even print, sentences like that. Of course, the debating point can be made that Dr. Bourne meant "an anti-war movement *which would interfere with a complete victory over fascism*", and that the People's Convention aims at a complete victory over fascism by being, among other things, anti-war. But that is clearly not what Dr. Bourne meant: and in fact he withdrew from the "Convention" as soon as he discovered its true significance.

### REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM

What, then, is "revolutionary defeatism"? A brief explanation has already been given; but it is necessary now, for a reason which will shortly appear, to go into greater and more explicit detail. For many uninstructed rank and filers really believe, and some instructed ones have hoodwinked themselves into believing, that the policy of attacking your own Government as the main enemy is perfectly consistent with the policy of defending your country from the foreign enemy *here and now*, as opposed to the policy of defending your country *only* after the military defeat of your Government by its foreign rival.

The policy and the argument on which "revolutionary defeatism" is based run as follows: "An imperialist war is against the interests of the working classes of all the belligerent Powers: and in such a war it is irrelevant to the working class which side 'wins'. All the warring Governments are equally the enemies of the working class as a whole: and it is accordingly the warring Governments that the working class must fight. But clearly the working class of a particular

country can only fight effectively against 'its own' Government—the Government that is on the spot: if it fights against the Government with which its own Government is at war, then it is helping its own Government in an imperialist war against that Government's rival. Therefore the working class of each country must regard, not the Government of the rival country, but 'its own' Government, as 'the major enemy', and must concentrate all its attacks on *it*.

"What must be its main method of attacking 'its own' Government? As its Government is at war, its main method must be to weaken that Government in its war effort, by various devices ranging from stirring up disaffection to mass sabotage, as circumstances may, from time to time, dictate and render feasible. It may often, of course, be desirable for it, for tactical reasons, to deny that this is the object, and to camouflage this object in all sorts of guises: nevertheless, this is the object which it must unswervingly pursue.

*"In a word, in an imperialist war it is the duty of the working class in each country to work for the military defeat of its own Government (which is to say, its own country) by the rival Government."*

The words in italics appear nowhere in my previous writings on this subject. I shrank from setting down in plain English what is the very essence of defeatism because I feared that if I did so I might seem to be accusing Communists of plain Fifth-Column treachery, of being on the same contemptible level as conscious agents of Hitler and Mussolini. Of course, they are nothing of the kind. On the contrary, they are, for the most part, idealists actuated by a passionate desire for human emancipation—far better people, in the main, than many of those who attack their policy and their methods, sometimes from good motives and sometimes from bad. If I bring myself now to write the words in question, it is because, in a matter of such ultimate gravity, there can be no excuse for allowing C.P. leaders to delude their followers by concealing the very essence of their policy, or for allowing rank

and file members and sympathisers to delude themselves by refusing to face up to the final issue.

\* \* \* \* \*

Such, then, is the classical "revolutionary defeatist" position, as associated above all with the great names of Liebknecht and Lenin during the war of 1914-1918. But between Liebknecht and Lenin there is a *nuance* of difference. Both pursued the "revolutionary defeatist" tactic because they thought the *result* of working for the defeat of their own country would be, not the victory of one imperialist "side" over the other imperialist "side", but general revolution and a general Socialist peace: both, in other words, regarded the victory of *either* side as undesirable. But Lenin consistently went farther, and expressed the view that, if either side was to win, then it was the "lesser evil" that the other side should win, because "his own" Government—Tsarism—was, in its attitude to the workers, the most reactionary in the world.<sup>1</sup>

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The clearest and most straightforward expression of the "revolutionary defeatist" policy is to be found in Lenin's essay "Defeat of One's Own Government in the Imperialist War" (*Lenin's Selected Works*, Vol. V, pp. 142-148. London, Lawrence & Wishart, 5s.). I wish I could reprint this essay in full; but as I doubt whether I should be granted permission to do so for the purpose of this article, I must content myself with a few quotations.

"A revolutionary class in a reactionary war cannot but

<sup>1</sup> "The struggle against the government that conducts the imperialist war must not halt in any country before the possibility of that country's defeat in consequence of revolutionary propaganda. *The defeat of the governmental army* [my italics] weakens the government, aids the liberation of the nationalities oppressed by it, and makes civil war against the ruling classes easier. This proposition is especially true in relation to Russia. The victory of Russia will bring with it a strengthening of world reaction, a strengthening of the reaction inside of the country, and will be accompanied by a complete enslavement of the peoples in the regions already seized. In view of this, the defeat of Russia appears to be the lesser evil under all conditions."—Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, p. 149.

desire the defeat of its government. This is an axiom." So the essay opens.

There follows an attack on Trotsky, who had written that "to desire Russia's defeat" (the words in quotation marks are Lenin's, paraphrasing Trotsky—note that already Lenin speaks of *Russia's*, not the *Russian Government's*, defeat, just as, in the passage quoted in the footnote, he speaks quite plainly of the defeat of the governmental *army*) was an incorrect substitution for "the revolutionary struggle against the war and the conditions that cause it". Lenin comments: "A 'revolutionary struggle against the war' is an empty and meaningless exclamation . . . *unless*<sup>1</sup> it means revolutionary action against *one's own government*—even in time of war. . . . And revolutionary action in war-time against one's own government undoubtedly and incontrovertibly means not only desiring its defeat, but *really facilitating such defeat* [my italics]." <sup>2</sup>

To desire Russia's defeat, Lenin explains, does not mean desiring Germany's victory—rather, in *all* imperialist countries the proletariat must now desire the defeat of its own Government. And here I wish to repeat what I have said whenever I have dealt with this subject, that Communists certainly do not desire Hitler's victory. But what is important is not their subjective *desire*, but the inevitable objective *result* of their defeatist tactics, if those tactics were to obtain a serious measure of support.

Lenin continues:

"Revolution in war-time is civil war: and the *transformation* of war between governments into civil war is, on the one hand, facilitated by military reverses ('defeats') of governments: on the other hand, it is *impossible* really to strive

<sup>1</sup> In the quotations from Lenin the italics are always his, unless the contrary is stated.

<sup>2</sup> This is the translation in the *Selected Works*, which were printed in Moscow. In the *Collected Works*, printed in the U.S.A., there is a different translation, and one that puts the matter still more clearly: "When we say revolutionary actions in war-time against one's own government, we indisputably mean not only the wish for its defeat, but practical actions leading towards such defeat" (*Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, p. 197).



for such a transformation without thereby facilitating defeat."

Shortly after comes a passage of the first importance:

"Anyone who seriously desired to refute the 'slogan' defeat of one's own government in the imperialist war, should have proved one of three things: (1) that the war of 1914-15 is not reactionary, or (2) that a revolution in connection with it is impossible, or (3) that it is impossible to co-ordinate and render mutual aid in the revolutionary movement in *all* belligerent countries."

We shall refer to this passage again; in the meantime, a comment by Lenin himself should be noted—namely, that if it were true that co-ordination and co-operation between the proletariats of the various belligerent countries was impossible, then (and the importance of the words is emphasised by the use of italics) "*the opportunists*" [i.e., the opponents of revolutionary defeatism] "*would be quite right in many respects!*".

Lenin administers a sharp reproof to those who shrink from the real meaning of defeatism. "The tsarist government was perfectly right", he says, "when it asserted that the agitation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour fraction . . . weakened the 'military power' of Russia [note again the use of 'Russia' rather than of 'the Russian Government'] and was likely to cause defeat. This is a fact. It is foolish to try to hide from it. The opponents of the defeat slogan are simply afraid of themselves when they refuse to recognise the very obvious fact that there is an inseparable connection between revolutionary agitation against the government and facilitating defeat."

Again: "The only real and not verbal policy of breaking 'civil peace', of accepting the class struggle, is for the proletariat to *take advantage* of the *embarrassment* of its government and its bourgeoisie *in order to overthrow them*. This, however, cannot be achieved, it *cannot be striven for*, without desiring the

defeat of one's own government, without facilitating this defeat."

To these few extracts may be added two from the article that immediately follows, entitled "The Defeat of Russia and the Revolutionary Crisis", and written, be it noted, not in 1917, but in October 1915:

"Our party will, as hitherto, issue the slogan: transform the imperialist war into civil war . . ."

(This note is consistently sounded by Lenin in his writings during 1914 and 1915, which are gathered together in Volume XVIII of his *Collected Works*.)

"The defeat of Russia *has turned out* to be the lesser evil. . . . Life teaches. Life is *marching*, through the defeat of Russia, to a revolution in Russia, and through that revolution, and in connection with it, to civil war in Europe."

Lenin's instructions are perfectly clear:

(1) Do everything you can to facilitate, to bring about, the defeat of your own country.

(2) But act with circumspection, lest your Government defeats you before you are strong enough to bring your policy to a triumphant conclusion. ("For the 'penetrating reader'," says Lenin, "facilitating your government's defeat does not mean 'blowing up bridges', organising *unsuccessful* [my italics] military strikes, and in general helping the government to inflict defeat on revolutionaries.")

(3) Work for civil war in your own country.

If the proletariats of all belligerent countries adopt these tactics, says Lenin, the result will be, not the victory of one country over another, but "a European revolution, the permanent peace of socialism, and the liberation of humanity from the horrors, misery, savagery and brutality now prevailing". And the way to make the proletariats of other

countries adopt these tactics is to show the way by adopting them yourself in your own country.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now it is vital to realise that "revolutionary defeatism" as formulated by Lenin in Russia during 1915, and for the 1914-18 war, has been adopted without an iota of change by the Communist Party in Great Britain for the war now in progress;<sup>1</sup> that this has been its policy, in spite of all apparent transformations, ever since its change of line from a "pro-war" policy to an "anti-war" policy about a month after the outbreak; and that the culmination of this policy to date is to be found in the "People's Convention".

This must be emphasised, because, as has already been said, a great number of sympathisers with the Communist Party, and even many rank-and-file members of the Party itself, not only are unaware of this, but indignantly and quite honestly deny it: the indignation being due to the fact that the very idea of doing anything that could facilitate a Hitler victory fills them with horror. I can only, therefore, suggest that, if any one of my readers feels inclined to challenge the truth of what I have said, he should ask for an interview with any member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, should put the question fairly and squarely to him, and should insist on getting a straight answer devoid of all equivocation. He may not succeed; but if he does, he will be in doubt no longer.

<sup>1</sup> Very "undialectically". Lenin wisely wrote: "Let us try to replace sophistry (i.e., the method of clinging to the outward similarity of cases without a connection between the events) by dialectics (i.e., the method of studying all the concrete circumstances of an event, and its development)." *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, p. 113.

As noted in Chapter I, while the C.P. of Great Britain has consistently pursued the straight defeatist policy, the *official leadership* of the C.P. of Germany has not done so, certainly during some, and perhaps during all, phases of the conflict. The reason for this is the complication introduced by the German-Soviet Pact, and, in general, by the position of the Soviet Union—the defence of which all Communists regard as their duty of duties, however little, on a reasonably long view, their actions in fact safeguard that defence. For as between a British and a German victory it is certain that the latter would be the greater menace to the U.S.S.R.

It must also be emphasised that there is nothing in the least dishonourable in this policy. Mistaken, yes: utterly disastrous in the circumstances of today, yes: to be fought tooth and nail; but adopted by Communists not because they are traitors but because they are international socialists (and therefore greatly superior to many of their critics) who have not understood that in Britain today an international socialist must also be a patriot.

### THE FALLACY OF REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM

It is no part of my purpose to discuss whether in certain circumstances, and if so in what circumstances, the policy of revolutionary defeatism is correct.<sup>1</sup> But clearly it *cannot* be correct in the present war, except on at least one of two assumptions: (1) that this is simply an inter-imperialist war, and that it is irrelevant to the workers which side wins: (2) that if you work for your country's defeat the result will be, not the victory of any one of the warring Governments, but revolution everywhere and a general Socialist peace.

Both assumptions are wholly false. A good deal was said on that head in *Where Are You Going?*<sup>2</sup>, which was written before the invasion of Holland, and in the letter to the *New Statesman*,<sup>3</sup> written after the fall of France: it may now be restated, brought together, amplified, and expressed with far greater certainty in the light of everything that has happened from May to December.

<sup>1</sup> By way of a mere hint, one (the most obvious) case may be given in which it is correct—and that is much over-simplified. If the Governments of two countries are engaged in a reactionary and inter-imperialist war, and the population of both countries has been outrageously treated to the point of really feeling—and not of just being told by theoreticians—that it “has no fatherland”: then defeatism is the correct policy for leaders of the people in both countries; because, if they lead well, and if they are able to co-ordinate and synchronise their respective defeatist tactics, the result will be a people's revolution in both countries and a people's peace between them.

But history and observation show unmistakably that men and women in the mass very rarely feel, “when it comes to it”, that they “have no fatherland”.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter I.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter II.

(1) While the deepest roots of the war are undoubtedly to be found in imperialist chaos, that is no reason why anti-imperialists, in a spasm of masochistic hatred, should cut off their noses to spite their faces. You have to look to the *result* of a victory by one side or the other. This is not a war in which a victory for Hitler would simply mean some juggling with territory, colonies, commercial interests, etc.: it is a war in which a victory for Hitler would mean the total Nazi-fication of the conquered country. A victory for Hitler is directly opposed to the interests not only of the working class of Great Britain and of the Colonial peoples, but also, and indeed most of all, of the working classes of Germany itself and all European countries.

Dr. Frank, formerly Minister for Justice in the German Reich, and now Gauleiter of Poland, has obligingly reminded us once more of the issue:

“Dr. Frank, Governor of German-occupied Poland, in a broadcast speech at a ‘German Christmas’ ceremony in the old theatre at Cracow (quoted by Reuter) declared that Hitler was called upon to be Leader of the World. He added that Poland was German and would remain German.

“Referring to the ‘many thousands’ of German soldiers who now lie in graves in all parts of Poland, the Governor said that mourning relatives of the fallen, ‘when remembering all these graves’, should also remember that ‘the greatest gift which Almighty God has given man is to be a German’. He added: ‘It is the greatest gift of heaven to be able to call oneself a German, and we are proud to master the world as Germans. Adolf Hitler has set up a Reich which stretches from the Atlantic to the River Bug and from the Pyrenees to North Cape; everywhere there the German war flag flies. Never before have we been so great and so exalted.

“ ‘Adolf Hitler emerged from the people. To-day he is

called upon to be the leader of the world—unhampered by anyone. Adolf Hitler did not begin this war—it was forced on him, and today he stands before the world as the greatest victor, the greatest war lord of history.’” (*Times*, Dec. 24th, 1940.)

To which the following may be added as a postscript:

“A spokesman of the German Foreign Office announced at a Press conference in Berlin that the German Government have adopted a new ruling concerning Polish citizenship.

“The official German view is that the term ‘Polish citizenship’ has lost all its legal basis and that consequently Polish citizens no longer exist. Former Polish citizens who can prove their German origin will be admitted to citizenship of the German Reich; while Poles who are not of the German race will be allowed to apply for the status of people who are *schutzbefohlene* (under German protection). Polish citizenship, however, will be definitely eliminated from the German official terminology.” (*Times*, Dec. 28th, 1940.)

Nor is it merely that all conquered countries would be *Germanised*: they would be *Nazified*, and their children would be trained to be Nazis as the German children have been trained for seven terrible years. And there are two important things to be said about Nazism: first, that it has found a way of destroying the very foundations of the working-class movement with a thoroughness of which no imperialist Government, not even the Tsardom, had previously dreamed—and of *keeping* them destroyed: second, that its avowed aim is to educate its victims into a belief that *everything* that men have slowly learned to call good is really evil—liberty, equality, fraternity, peace, kindness, gentleness, mercy, pity, impartial justice, objective truth. And what, I ask, is at the very heart of the labour movement: what *created* Socialism

and Marxism: what is the one hope of all the dispossessed throughout the world—if it is not a passionate determination that men shall be free and equal and brothers? Let that go—let children learn to spit on peace and freedom and equality, and glorify brute force and slave-owning and enslavement—and the sun of the working class is set before it has risen.

Is it seriously suggested that the victory of Britain or of the Anglo-American bloc—even a victory of the old-fashioned kind, disastrous though that would be—would have the same result as the victory of Hitler? If anyone believes it, he can only be a man so tormented by a hate-complex as to be no longer sane.

(2) It is fantastic to imagine that, if any considerable body of the British people were to adopt defeatist tactics and to stir up civil war, the result would be, not the victory of Hitler, but a similarly effective growth of defeatism and civil war in Germany, and so the ending of the war by international revolution and a socialist peace. On the contrary, it would most certainly mean the victory of Hitler. Because

(a) After seven years of preparation, and in view of our almost total unpreparedness in 1939, Hitler is immensely stronger than we are. *It is still necessary to strain every nerve every day to prevent defeat.* The under-estimation of this factor, which was mentioned in Chapter I, is preposterous after the events of the summer.

The present line of the C.P. is once again to pooh-pooh Germany's strength: they are compelled to do so, in order to "put across" their policy. For instance (it is only an instance) Mr. Dutt tells us in effect in the November *Labour Monthly* that during the summer the menace of a Nazi invasion was a myth, deliberately put about by Mr. Churchill in order to enslave the British working class. "It was well known and admitted by experts from the outset" he tells us in his best Papal style "that the conditions were not yet present for successful invasion." But Mr. Dutt should really

have his stuff vetted by the Editor of the *Daily Worker*. That journal asked in a leading article of June 13th: "*What is this Coalition Government up to? The situation facing the British people is ghastly, nerve-shattering. Italy joins Germany, Paris is besieged and Britain threatened with invasion.*" On September 14th (under the heading "FAN EVERY SPARK"): "An attempted invasion is now an imminent possibility. Churchill has said as much. Moreover, the Italian attack on Egypt has now begun. This attack and the invasion of Britain have always been spoken about as simultaneous moves." Five days later: "The invasion and blockade of Britain loom nearer. . . . The war holds nothing but misery and suffering for the people of all countries." On those occasions it suited the C.P. to make the most of the country's danger.

(b) The modern war-machine, and in particular Hitler's war-machine, moves with terrifying rapidity. Those who discounted this argument before the month of May have no excuse for doing so now.

Bearing in mind Hitler's immense military strength and the speed of his war-machine, any honest man *must* see that defeatist tactics here—the slowing down of war production, a weakening of civilian morale, any letting up of our inflexible determination to resist—would inevitably mean conquest by Hitler long before any similar tactics had had time to be successful in Germany.

(c) Even apart from this, the organisation of the Gestapo is such that effective opposition to the Nazi régime, issuing in sabotage, can only be a matter of slow and painful growth—*except in the circumstance of the defeat of the military machine and of the Gestapo with it*. British Communists used to understand this well enough: Chinese Communists, whose "line" is national defence against Japan, understand it still. "The Japanese revolution will occur" says Mao Tse-tung "after the first severe defeat suffered by the



Japanese Army." And when he says "defeat", this is not a *lapsus linguae* for "victory".

\* \* \* \* \*

Look again at the words of Lenin: "Anyone who seriously desired to refute the 'slogan' defeat of one's own government in the imperialist war, should have proved one of three things: . . . (3) that it is impossible to co-ordinate and render mutual aid in the revolutionary movement in *all* belligerent countries . . . [If it were impossible, then] *the opportunists* [anti-defeatists] *would be quite right in many respects!*" Of course it is impossible to co-ordinate *in time* revolutionary movements in Britain and Germany, in view of (a) Hitler's strength, (b) the speed of the 1940 military machine, (c) the Gestapo. And of course, therefore, "the opportunists are right."

\* \* \* \* \*

A few further considerations may be added:

(1) It is sometimes said by Communists—it was said repeatedly when the German armies were sweeping on to Paris, and an example of such talk was given in Chapter II—that, having successfully pursued defeatist tactics and "facilitated the defeat" of their own Government and country, then, in the moment of defeat, they would be able to rally the people and defend them against the foreign imperialists. The answer given in Chapter II appears even more valid six months later: namely, that (a) the immensely strong French C.P. utterly failed in practice to do anything of the kind—and it is wholly irrelevant to plead in excuse that they had been suppressed, for suppression was the inevitable consequence of their policy, and was therefore a factor in the situation which should have been reckoned with from the beginning (only a fool would follow a policy which depends for its success on his being on the spot at a given moment, and which at the same time must itself inevitably result in his *not* being on the spot): (b) they

*could* do nothing of the kind—suppressed or not. People who talk like that, it must be repeated, are a hundred years out of date: they are living in the romantic world of barricades and not in the real and beastly world of tanks and bombing aeroplanes—those same barricades on which, it was suggested in *Where Are You Going?*, Communists relied when they talked so facilely of a German revolution against a Hitler machine not merely unbroken but strengthened by victory. You sabotage war-production; you tell the people that the war is not in their interest; you cry for peace; and then, when the country is in chaos, when “your own” Government has fled, and when the dive-bombers are machine-gunning the women and children, all at once you successfully oppose to the tanks and aeroplanes of the invader—what? The bare fists of a demoralised populace! That is cloud-cuckooland—and a jesuitical cloud-cuckooland at that.

Moreover, Communists, still thinking in terms of barricades, shut their eyes to the effectiveness of the modern machine-gun, tank, aeroplane, and Gestapo in *holding down* a people, *after* it has been conquered and disarmed. “The French people will rise again,” exclaimed a writer, or words to that effect, in the *Left News*: “they will rise again, led by the Communist Party—and right speedily!” This is the famous optimism—the silly, slap-dash, “plugged” optimism which is irresponsibility’s substitute for clear thinking. And when we ask “They will rise up against the *Panzerdivisionen*—with what?” we are accused of “having no confidence in the working class”. Just so, in the old days, when we pleaded desperately (this time with the Communists) for a stand against Hitler in the Rhineland, in Austria, in Czechoslovakia, in Spain, and for an agreement with the Soviet Union—when we pointed out the appalling peril in which Britain would otherwise find herself—the Fascist claque at the back of the hall bawled us down with its insane chorus of “Do you dare to suggest that Britain can’t beat the world?”

Yes, France *will* rise again—but on condition that Britain stands, undefeated, to challenge and break the Hitler power. And when France fell, it was only by a miracle that Britain stood.

Resist *before conquest*—that is the lesson of the last seven years: after conquest it will be *too late*.

(2) It is also sometimes argued that “in the moment of defeat, the Soviet Union will come to the aid of the defeated”. The “depths of folly”<sup>1</sup> into which such arguers have fallen seem even more abysmal today than when the writer used the expression six months ago, now that we have had a further six months’ experience of Soviet foreign policy. For (a) in practice the Soviet Union did nothing of the kind in the case of France; and if it is objected that the opportunity did not arise because the proletariat did not capture power in the moment of defeat, then the argument becomes even more nonsensical. “The S.U. will help the proletariat to capture power in the moment of defeat; but of course if the proletariat fails to capture power the S.U. won’t help them.” This is the politics of Bedlam. The argument doesn’t “click”: and in the meantime Göring dines at Maxim’s, and the S.A. men or their French toadies besmirch every lovely village of France: (b) to imagine that the S.U. would do anything of the kind shows a ludicrous misunderstanding of Soviet foreign policy, which is (as even those who couldn’t see it six months ago should see now) to keep out of war, at any rate till Germany has been greatly weakened.

(3) Parallels are drawn between the present situation and “Brest-Litovsk”. It is pointed out that Russia was defeated, had to suffer serious loss of territory, and yet was able to organise an independent Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Yes, but (a) Russian territory is so enormous (“a sixth of the world’s surface”) that she could suffer losses and still retain a vast terrain in which to re-organise herself, and into which

Germany was unable to penetrate—compare China and Japan today: whereas if our island were conquered, we should have nowhere to retreat; (b) Germany was still at war, after Brest-Litovsk, with Britain, France, the United States, etc., which meant that she was unable to devote her energies to a final conquest of Russia: whereas if she conquered us no antagonist would remain—unless the United States had come in by that time, in spite of the efforts of her own C.P. and the C.Ps. of the world to prevent her from doing so.

### DEFEATISM AND PACIFISM

A final word before leaving this part of the subject—a word which would be unnecessary, were it not a matter of common observation that many pacifists support C.P. policy through a total misunderstanding of it. C.P. policy has nothing whatever to do with pacifism. Pacifists are people who believe, whether on political, ethical or religious grounds, that the violence of war is never justified. I do not agree with them—I wish I did, for ever since at the age of six I saw a battle picture I have not been able to think of war without horror and nausea—but I respect and indeed envy them. But while Communists passionately hope for the ultimate abolition of war and think that this will be brought about by the triumph of international Socialism (which, while it will not of itself necessarily involve permanent peace, is, without question, the most important condition for it) in the meantime they have no sort of objection to war *as such*—but only to certain kinds of war.

For Communists, indeed, a tendency to pacifism is the most vulgar of deviations. “We are not”, cried Lenin, “. . . for the philistine Utopia of shrinking away from great wars.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Communists must take advantage of pacifist sentiment, must “draw in” pacifists. “A mass

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, p. 266.

sentiment for peace", we read in the famous *Socialism and War*, which Zinoviev and Lenin wrote in the summer of 1915 just before the Zimmerwald Conference, "often expresses the beginning of a protest, an indignation and a consciousness of the reactionary nature of the war. It is the duty of all Social-Democrats to take advantage of this sentiment. They will take the most ardent part in every movement and in every demonstration made on this basis, but they will not deceive the people by assuming that in the absence of a revolutionary movement it is possible to have peace without annexations . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Just recently, Communists were foremost (rightly) in urging the Spanish people to continue the struggle to the very end; to-day, they are passionately anxious (rightly) that China should fight on to final victory. They tend, indeed, to bellicosity; before 1939 a small minority of them undoubtedly *wanted* war with Hitler, and did not merely regard it, as so many of us regarded it, as a terrible *necessity* if the abandonment of "appeasement" resulted in it. If at any time the Soviet Union changed its policy, they would be quite as bellicose again. Moreover, the essence of revolutionary defeatism is "Turn the imperialist war into civil war"—and war is war, whether it is civil or imperialist. "Down with the sentimental and foolish preacher's yearnings for a 'peace at any price'. Let us raise the banner of civil war!" <sup>2</sup>

### DEFEATISM UP TO THE BOMBING OF LONDON

The Communist Party has undeviatingly pursued the "revolutionary defeatist" policy—as, given its assumption, it was its plain duty to do—from its change of line in October 1939 right up to the present date. All apparent transformations have merely been new *forms* under which, as the

<sup>1</sup> In this passage the word "Social-Democrats" is used in the sense in which we use "Communists".

<sup>2</sup> *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, p. 88.

objective situation has changed and developed, the unchanging policy might be most suitably carried out. There was the straight cry "This is an unjust, imperialist war: stop it!" of the early days: there was the furious propaganda, to the effect that we were the aggressors, which started on February 1st: there was the attack on the incompetence of the Chamberlain Government (wholly justified—but not for the reasons actuating the C.P.) at the time of Narvik or Larvik: there was the "Men of Munich" campaign as the Germans swept on to Paris: there was the L.D.V. decision: there was the campaign against American aid, and against the handing over of the fifty life-saving destroyers. And finally there was the "alarm and despondency" campaign, which got into its full stride when the intensive bombing of London started on September 7th.

#### THE ALARM AND DESPONDENCY CAMPAIGN

During this latter period, every device—of headline and description in the *Daily Worker*, of conversation in street and Tube and public-house—has been utilised to make the very most of the aerial terror. You can make the most of such terror for a variety of reasons. You can, for instance, make the most of it in order to stiffen the people's will to resist—as the *Daily Worker* and innumerable Communist speakers did in the case of the German and Italian attacks on Spain and of the Japanese attack on China. Or you can make the most of it in order to *weaken* the will to resist, in order to suggest to the public "Is this really worth while?", in order, in Lenin's words, "*to take advantage of the embarrassment of its government and its bourgeoisie in order to overthrow them.*" This, however, cannot be achieved, *it cannot be striven for*, without desiring the defeat of one's own government, without facilitating this defeat."

Can anyone carry self-delusion to the point of being able to read through a file of the *Daily Worker* and still believe

that the motive was any other than to *weaken* the will to resist? When you write in staring headlines of shambles, and speak of "piles of dead" and "the shrieks of the dying": when, *at the same time*, you tell people that this is an unjust war, fought for no purpose but to increase the profits of the rich: when you jeer at any comment about the morale and heroism of the public, and call it "sunshine talk"; what possible purpose can you have but to stir up hatred of the Government and hatred of the war, with the object of undermining the country's determination to "stand up to" Hitler? And provided you hold the view that this is an unjust, imperialist war: that, if one or other of the imperialist Governments is to win, it is irrelevant to the workers *which*: that defeatist tactics here will produce, *simultaneously*, equally effective defeatist tactics in Germany: and that the result will be an overthrow of reactionary elements in all belligerent countries and a speedy peace of the peoples "without annexations and without indemnities"—then your actions are not merely justified, but are obligatory. But if you were able to persuade the people of this country to believe all those things, you would have a speedy awakening in the concentration camps and on the executioner's block of Hitler's sadists.

Similarly with the Communist agitation against the Government's shelter policy, evacuation policy, treatment of the homeless, and the rest. The abuses which it revealed were mostly real, and sometimes disgraceful, abuses: many of the remedies proposed were necessary remedies: but a man must be a born political idiot to be able to read through those issues of the *Daily Worker* without realising that the whole object of the campaign was "to take advantage of the embarrassment of the Government" for a defeatist end. If anyone has any doubt about the matter, let him contrast those issues of the *Daily Worker* with contemporary issues of the *Daily Herald*, the *News Chronicle* and the *New Statesman*, all of which were every bit as outspoken as the *Daily Worker*,

but quite clearly with the object of remedying the abuses, and not of weakening the country's determination.

Here are a few examples from the *Daily Worker* :

“WHAT WILL BE LEFT?”

(Headline of leader, August 27th)

“CHEER, BOYS, CHEER”

(Headline of leader, September 7th)

“The blacker the news the more cheerful the Prime Minister. . . . Why worry, boys? Only 1075 civilians have been killed and only 800 out of our 13,000,000 houses have been destroyed. . . . The realities behind the Churchill blarney are the prospects of more bombs and less sirens.”  
(Same leader.)

“The ‘sunshine boys’ are at it again. Press a button in the Ministry of Information and Fleet Street goes to it with alacrity.” (Same day.)

“REPRISAL RAID ON LONDON. GOVERNMENT ADMITS 1700 DEAD AND WOUNDED”

(Main splash headline, September 9th)

“A partial survey of one part of London by *Daily Worker* reporters yesterday seemed to indicate that the preliminary official estimate will have to be seriously revised. . . . From almost the beginning of Saturday afternoon's London raid it was obvious to everyone that yet a new stage in the murderous intensification of the war between the two imperial Governments had begun. . . . Yesterday I walked through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.” (Same day.)

“DEATH OVER LONDON”

(Headline of leader, same day)

“Bombs were scattered over a wide area, but it is not recorded that the West End was affected. . . . Among



many sections of the workers the opening out of this total war has increased the longing to find a way out of the present horrors . . . that will end the power of imperialist war-mongers." (Same leader.)

"The huge civilian population of two capital cities, London and Berlin, are suffering the most savage slaughter and destruction ever seen in the world, and everything indicates that attacks upon both of them are being intensified. . . . Each Government, of course, accuses the other of 'indiscriminate' attacks upon civilian objectives. Both kept as silent as possible regarding the details of the real destruction caused, and above all about the real sufferings of the civilian populations." (Sept. 12th.)

"How long will it go on and where will it all end? This is the question on everybody's lips. To this question there is no answer except the thud of the bombs by day and by night, the crash of the falling buildings and the screams of the dying." (Opening paragraph of leader, same day.)

**"CABINET NEVER MEANT TO SAVE YOU FROM BOMBS"**

(Headline, September 16th)

"Never has the Press been so degraded. . . . Every newspaper has discovered a new blessed word—endurance. Twenty-pound-a-week star writers pay their tribute to the 'courage and endurance' of the masses. These stars hawk their aching hearts round on a plate. Strangely enough, they meet only big, strong, calm, quiet, grim and patriotic members of the working class. What the ordinary man is saying never reaches them." (William Rust, September 20th.)

"The torpedoing of eighty-five children between the ages of five and fifteen years and an unknown number of anti-Nazi refugees in mid-Atlantic last week is a horrible event which has rightly shocked millions of people. It is as

horrible as the killing by bombs of children in London, Berlin, Newcastle, Cologne and many other cities—all of them brutal incidents of the battle of the empires.

“All these children and other innocent people are the victims of a bloody struggle which will go on as long as the people—particularly the parents of the millions of children exposed to these horrors—permit the rulers of the empires in Berlin, London and Washington to continue their desperate conflict for the mastery of the riches of the world at the expense of the working people of the world and even of their children.

“It will be noted that almost all the children torpedoed in the latest ‘war incident’ were poor children from state-aided schools. . . .

“These people on both sides are in fact totally indifferent to the fate of any children, except, of course, the important children of the ruling class.” (Leading article, September 24th.)

“Most Terrible Thing Yet . . . Out of London’s two most terrible nights of agony, this ghastly scar stands out conspicuous for all to see.” (October 16th.)

“I saw them myself outside a North London station. Some of them were crying with horror and weariness. Others, squatting on cases and bundles, tried to keep their children from running about in the street upon which at any moment a bomb or shrapnel might fall.” (Frank Pitcairn, same day.)

**“6334 KILLED AND 8695 BADLY HURT”**  
(Splash headline, November 14th)

**“1000 CASUALTIES IN ‘REPRISAL’ RAID ON COVENTRY.** The bloody bombing match between the British and German Governments has reached a new high level.” (Main splash, November 16th.)

“After Coventry, Hamburg. Piles of dead and wounded in two cities. Both Governments boast of their exploits; the long hours of uninterrupted bombing, the widespread fires and the use of the biggest high-explosive bombs in existence. The people are dumb and horror-stricken. Which town will be the next victim? . . .

“Face the meaning of Coventry and Hamburg. These are isolated examples showing what colossal destruction is possible when both sides choose to intensify the attacks.” (Leader, same day.)

### “COVENTRY A SHAMBLES”

(Headline, November 18th)

“I have been in the bomb-devastated cities and villages of Spain, but nowhere have I seen such sights as in Coventry.

“When we tramped through the town a scene of utter destruction and confusion confronted us. And that was not only in the centre of the city.

“I did not see a single street where no bomb had dropped, nor did my companion. I am not saying that no such street exists—simply that I did not see one.” (Opening paragraph of article.)

### “WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?”

(Headline of leader, November 28th)

### POLLITT'S ARTICLE

Lest there should be any accusation of selecting and suppressing for the purposes of the argument, it will be well to quote in full an article by Harry Pollitt on the back page of the issue of September 11th. It was led up to by a huge headline at the top of the front page “OVER 3000 DEAD AND WOUNDED IN TWO DAYS”; by photographs of wreckage, with the caption “‘Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat’ Are Here”; by paragraphs in the “Worker’s Notebook”;

and by a leading article. Under the heading "RECKONING DAY WILL COME", Pollitt wrote as follows:

"On Easter Saturday, 1938, Bill Rust and I stood awe-stricken amidst the ruins of the lovely Spanish town of Tortosa. We both hoped that neither we or anyone else in Britain would live to see the day when such sights would be seen in London.

"Now they can be seen, seen as if some film producer had depicted in replica almost every phase of the ghastly Tortosa scene.

"Fires, explosions, destruction everywhere and everywhere where the workers live. The same trek of families seeking safety from the rain of death that the heavens seem to pour down as if to mock everything for which heaven is supposed to be the symbol of.

"I know and love the East End. Every street and landmark is familiar to me. I know its humour and its fears; its soul-destroying poverty and unemployment and its hatred for the 'rich of the other end'. But never have I admired its people more than now, when they see their homes, their streets and places of amusement in ruins. The docks and shipyards where they have gained casual and precarious employment aflame.

#### FLAME OF WRATH

"They hate the sunshine stuff of the Liddells, Phillips and McClouds of the B.B.C. They hate the hackneyed stuff of the highly-paid writers of the Fleet Street Press extolling their 'humour, their pathos and their bravery'.

"These people do not know the East End. If they, and the Government and Big Business they represent, did they would be deadly afraid. Afraid of the wrath of the people, afraid of the latent class-consciousness that is not only smouldering, but is quickening into an angry flame. A flame that unlike those that light the docks is going to

consume in its fury and hatred everything that Mayfair, Downing Street, and the rich stand for.

“Listen to this. It is not Harry Pollitt who speaks to you now. It is the wife of a man who served with distinction in the last war and is a mother of four children. She was describing to me her ten-hour experience in her Anderson shelter last night.

#### IN THE SHELTER

“We sat last night in our Anderson shelter, like everybody else in the East End, we thought it was droning over our house. I said to my old man: The Government have let us down. I’ll bet the bombs won’t be over Buckingham Palace.

“If those big nobs of the other end want war, why the hell don’t they go and fight the same people in their set in Berlin? Why have the workers always to pay the price?

“This bunch have never earned an honest penny in their lives. They cannot make a cup of tea for themselves, and now they tell us what they are going to do to Berlin. A lot of consolation that will be for me if one drops on this tin hut and kills my four.

“These rich folk should see the East End, see its dead, who we have to dig and fish out from the ruins. Mrs. Chamberlain ain’t fishing her old man out, I’ll bet. Or Churchill either; as for Bevin and Morrison, I bet their wives and kids ain’t sitting in a tin hut.

“We have been let down. The day of reckoning has got to come. I hope I’ll be in at it.’

#### TIRED QUEUES

“Yes, that is the East End. Unconquerable though deadly serious about its womenfolk and children.

“There are long tired queues waiting for buses leaving

the East End. Their modest parcels and bags bulging with precious household necessities. The buses are overcrowded, lorries are pressed into service. It is true there is a horror of death. There is more than a horror of the mutilation of children. But there is no panic, the working-class morale is unimpaired. There is a deadly calm.

*"Its quiet determination that it is never going to happen again bodes ill for the rich at the other end. It is a calm that betokens that the day of reckoning will come, not against the German dockers and shipyard workers but against the boss class of Britain whose policy has landed them in this position. [Emphasis in original.]*

"Meantime, let the demand go forth—

- (1) Mobilise every motor car in the West End to help the women and children of the East End to more secure places.
- (2) Take over the West End hotels, mansions and flats to house the women and children while adequate arrangements are made for their welfare.
- (3) Organise in a planned manner the evacuation of the women and children from the East End while there is time.
- (4) Mobilise all available labour and materials to build deep bomb-proof shelters throughout the East End of London."

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It happens that I had a talk one afternoon with Harry Pollitt very shortly after his return from Tortosa. Those were the days when Hitler was the enemy of enemies—the days of the campaign which were to lead to Pollitt's appeal in the *Daily Worker* of March 30th 1939, of which the headlines were "Communist Appeal to Attlee, Sinclair and Churchill" "Urged to Defeat Cabinet and Form New Government"—whereas the same Pollitt was to write in the *Labour Monthly*

of December 1940: "Labour's own daily newspaper, the *Daily Herald*, hails Churchill as Britain's man of destiny. That is the measure of Labour's shame, the betrayal of every principle of Socialism and Peace. For one thing now understood by our people is that, wherever Churchill speaks or acts, suffering and death are the result, exactly the same as when Hitler speaks or acts."

I shall never forget that afternoon. Pollitt strode up and down the room, with an extremity of passion in his face and voice—a passion of fury against Hitler and of deepest pity for the women and babies of Spain—and he said: "If there is war between us and Hitler, and if it goes on for ten or twenty years, and if every town and village of Britain is razed to the ground, the working class of this country will never submit to him." He was utterly sincere: he is utterly sincere now. By the same token he was sincere when he wrote in September 1939: "Why does the Communist Party support the war? [Because] it recognises that the victory of fascism . . . leads to the forcible destruction of every democratic right and liberty that the working class has fought so bitterly, and at such cost and sacrifice, to win from its class enemies": and no less sincere when he wrote in the *Daily Worker* of October 7th, 1940 "The trade union movement is in greater danger from the policy of its own leaders than it is from Hitler." If anyone thinks that the two sincerities are incompatible, he is a good logician but a poor psychologist. Men of a certain temperament find no difficulty in being sincere about anything they may decide to believe in; and Pollitt's decision to believe in the new "line" was based—to his honour, and however mistakenly—on the Leninist conception of a disciplined party, which, whatever its long-term effect on the individual (and, mysticism apart, parties are simply collections of individuals) is in its impulse very far from contemptible.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A brilliant discussion of this question will be found in Arthur Koestler's

Let there be no misunderstanding. The horror of aerial warfare is terrible beyond expression: the suffering of the poor is incomparably greater than that of the rich: there had been, so far as can be judged from the outside, a most discreditable incompetence and neglect: three of Pollitt's practical proposals are to be warmly supported—the fourth is, in the circumstances of the moment, rather a slogan than a proposal: Capitalism is detestable, and must be replaced by Socialism: and finally I am not discussing here—I have already discussed—whether revolutionary defeatism is right or wrong. What I am doing is to point out that this *is* revolutionary defeatism. It is the policy of regarding your own Government as the enemy of enemies (“The enemy is at home”, as Liebknecht put it): the policy of “transforming the imperialist war into a civil war”: the policy of “taking advantage of the embarrassment of your own Government and bourgeoisie in order to overthrow them”. And because Pollitt is not only a man whose every word and action spring from compassion for human suffering; because he is also of great political intelligence: he knows as surely as Lenin knew that “revolutionary action in war-time against one's own Government undoubtedly and incontrovertibly means not only desiring its defeat, but really facilitating [or, in the other translation, “practical actions leading towards”] such defeat”: that “it is *impossible* really to strive for such a transformation without thereby facilitating defeat”: and that “there is an inseparable connection between revolutionary agitation against the Government and facilitating defeat”.

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Just as Pollitt's sincerity may be freely admitted, so there is no suggestion that rank and file Communists were insincere in their anxiety to save people from all avoidable suffering. They were not. But what is not merely suggested but

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novel about the Russian trials, *Darkness at Noon*; and the question of Communist psychology and discipline is dealt with in the Epilogue to this book.



stated without the peradventure of a doubt is that this was not the primary motive behind the campaign, nor, on "defeatist" promises, should it have been. Still less is it true, as some dolts have persuaded themselves into believing, that the campaign was carried on in order to improve the morale of the people, and so increase their determination to "stand up to Hitler".

### INDUSTRIAL STRIFE

What has been said in the last paragraph applies no less to the stirring up of industrial strife, which was a developing feature of Communist activity during the period under review. In many cases workers, whether individually or collectively, were suffering very real abuses at the hands of employers: Communists were genuinely anxious to remedy them: but who but a simpleton, innocent to the point of criminality, could read the evidence and still doubt that the primary motive of the agitation was two-fold—to slow down production with the object of "embarrassing the Government" in its war effort, and to lay the foundations for launching civil war in the moment of the defeat which the slowing down of production had helped to produce? There is a very simple test. If you want to remedy an abuse in a factory, and at the same time do not want, if possible, to impede the war effort, you are glad if the matter is satisfactorily settled without a strike, and sorry if it isn't. The jubilation of the *Daily Worker* whenever a strike or stoppage or "holiday" occurred was unmistakable. And it was right to be jubilant—believing what it did.

Some headings or headlines:

**"MINERS MAY LEAVE WORK"**

(September 5th)

**"STRIKE BALLOT REQUEST BY IMPORTANT ARMS CENTRE"**

(October 2nd—main splash headline on front page)

**"24-HOUR ULTIMATUM BY ENGINEERS"**

(October 4th)

**"CLYDE AIDS ENGINEERS"**

(October 7th)

**"BOYS STOP WORK AT ARMS FIRM"**

(October 12th)

**"HOUR'S STOPPAGE ANSWERS BOSS"**

(October 17th)

**"DOWN TOOLS FOR STEWARD"**

(Same date)

**"2,000 MINERS ON STRIKE"**

(October 21st)

**"600 SHIPYARD MEN STAY OUTSIDE"**

(Same date and page)

**"ENGINEERS' STAND WINS INCREASING  
SUPPORT"**

(Same date)

**"STOP WORK IN PRICE DISPUTE"**

(October 28th)

**"SCOTTISH STRIKES MAY SPREAD"**

(October 29th)

**"ALL CLYDESIDE MAY STOP WORK"**

(November 13th)

**"BIG VOTE FOR STRIKE AT A.E.U."**

(November 30th)

**"PAY DISPUTE STOPS AIRCRAFT WORKS"**

(December 5th)

**"'REST' GIVES MEN VICTORY"**

(December 11th)

**"STOPPAGE WINS REINSTATEMENT"**

(December 14th)

From a resolution of the Central Committee of the C.P. (*Daily Worker*, October 5th):

“The mass ferment in the factories is rising, and has shown itself in innumerable minor actions and lightning strikes, the prelude of greater struggles.”

From a leading article of October 15th:

“The ranks of the pep-talkers have been swollen by the accession of Mr. Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, who after his visit to the Trades Union Congress, made a tour of some of Lancashire’s big industrial plants and munition works and addressed the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation of Trades Councils.

“Can it be that the Government is afraid of the growing realisation in the factories of the nature of this war for which the workers are asked to sacrifice their liberties and living standards? . . . That is all the official Labour policy of collaboration with the employers in spreading the war has to offer the working class—pep-talks on death.”

From a leading article of October 18th:

“And you go to Scotland and ask for sacrifices in the sacred cause of defeating Nazism. Look around at your own associates, Mr. Bevin. There are Britain’s Hitlers. They are already ‘over here’. And the working class knows it, and is not going to be doped by you into slackening the struggle of the people against the enemies of the people.”

From a Workshop Talk by Councillor Jack Owen (November 29th):

“All know the fate that is in store for them after the war; there is no blazing patriotism—no wild enthusiasm for this war. Talk that would positively frighten Sir John Anderson is common in the shops today. That is the background of the coming engineers’ wage battle.

“There is a sullenness amongst the workers that bodes ill for the boss. Recently I’ve talked to members of the A.E.U. district committees from the north and from the south, and each tell the same story of district committees being overwhelmed with a very large number of small disputes.

“It was diagnosed by one district committee-man as a ‘dose of bad temper’. I think it is a sign of the coming storm.”

By Mr. Dutt (most explicit and direct of Communist writers) under heading *What Do We Look For From the People’s Convention?* (December 7th):

“The call for industrial conscription now begins to be loudly sounded.

“But the resistance and anger of the industrial workers is shown in the demands for wage increases in all the leading industries, and in the vote of the Clydeside and London engineers for strike action at the recent A.E.U. National Committee. The legal prohibition of strikes has not prevented the number of strikes rising higher than before the prohibition.

“This beginning of the readiness for active resistance is accompanied by the discontent among the men in the Armed Forces, and the unrest of all sections of the people over the disorganisation of their lives, rising prices, short supplies and the neglect of air-raid protection.

“The signs for the coming year thus point to a prospect of, first, a most serious economic situation; second, great class conflicts in industry.”

By Councillor Jack Owen, at the moment of sending these pages to press (January 17th):

“The Government, even with the powerful aid of the Bevins, Morrisons and Co., have most definitely failed to

rouse any sort of enthusiasm for the war effort. Only by actually working in the shops can one get a full realisation of this very significant fact.

“Although this situation can and will have revolutionary repercussions, yet it is a situation which is astonishing in its matter-of-factness.

“Mark you, it would be incorrect to describe it as an anti-war attitude, it is more of a cynical outlook on the profits the boss is making plus a very reluctant yielding to the ‘sacrifice’ demands made upon them. I believe the bosses know just where that feeling is going to lead, and they are very nervous of the outcome. 1941 is going to see some fierce trials of strength. We must be ready. My stock-taking shows that the worker has still a good deal up his sleeve. . . .

“Even after the blitz in Manchester, when the news of it came on you would have certainly thought that the Manchester workers would have been interested, wouldn’t you? However the broad grins and skits at the news given (from non-political workers it should be understood) was convincing proof that Churchill, Bevin and Co. had signally failed to fool them.”

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Since what is here written will certainly be used by the Economic League for its own evil purposes, let it be said in terms that (a) many of the things for which the workers have struck would have been granted without a strike by any decent, not to say patriotic, employer, (b) it would take a very great deal of strike action to do as much damage to the war effort as is being done to it daily by the greed and selfishness of employers, to say nothing of the chaos and incompetence of unregulated capitalism. But that is beside the present point. The present point is that in an “imperialist war” the Communists *want* industrial conflict, *want* strikes, *want* stoppages—as they are bound to do if they are true to

their defeatist aim of "embarrassing the Government". They want them for their own sake, irrespective of the immediate issues on which they are fought.<sup>1</sup>

### WORKING IN ALERTS

The stirring up of industrial strife was "all mixed up", as Mr. Churchill might say, with the campaign to stop work and keep buses and trams off the roads during an "alert". What are stupidly called "supporters" of the war will strain every nerve to increase production to the maximum, for they believe that otherwise it will be impossible to defeat a war machine that has been built up, with the one unswerving aim of conquest, during seven long years of, on our side, appeasement and unpreparedness. They therefore believe that, in our desperate race against time, any avoidable interference with or slowing down of production wounds our power to defeat Hitler in its very vitals.

*For that precise reason, a defeatist must do everything he can to keep production down. In his view, this is a rich men's war, a war waged by the ruling class for dividends and profits: the enemy is at home: it is therefore just in its very vitals that he must seek to wound that enemy.*

"Make no mistake", wrote the *Daily Worker* of December 3rd, "there is something new and big astir in the factories of Britain. The reports which came into the National Committee of the People's Convention on Sunday are clear. The movement for the Convention is spreading fast and powerfully in the factories.

"Here is a big aircraft factory which has already elected its delegates. Here is another which has sent a hurry order for 1,000 copies of the Convention Manifesto. Here is a third which has made a handsome contribution to the Convention funds.

<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that particular strikes may not be, in certain circumstances, justifiable or even desirable in war-time. See p. 170.

“Essentially, this is the response of men and women who at every point of their work and their lives see themselves harassed and exploited in the interests of the rich men’s war, who are not tricked by the rich men’s own propaganda, who reject the unending prospect of ‘blood and tears’ the rich men offer them, and see in this great Convention movement a practical means of getting things done that they themselves want to get done.”

Precisely: why on earth should a worker risk his life to increase the profits of his enemy?

Three observations must be made. First, the Communist Party is operating in conditions of legality. It cannot simply say, “In this rich men’s war, utilise every opportunity that would enable you to slow down production,” for it would be immediately suppressed if it did. It can only rarely say or imply, “In this rich men’s war under no circumstances do a stroke of work if the slightest risk is involved”—for the same reason. It must therefore usually say, not “Go to ground during an alert” but “Go to ground during an alert unless such and such a reform is introduced”—the essence of the matter being the going to ground, and not the reform. Similarly, in the Communist Press the going to ground appears as the headline and the reform as the text: the correct suggestion is thus conveyed and the correct atmosphere created, for a large majority of the public reads the headlines regularly but the text rarely or never. Thus the following are among the headlines to be noted in the *Daily Worker* between August 31st and December 24th:

“LONDON BUSMEN TO TAKE COVER”

“STOP WITH SIRENS”

“RISKS OF NEW WARNING SYSTEM”

“WHO’D BE A SPOTTER?”

“REFUSE TO WORK IN AIR RAIDS”

“STOP WORK FOR SIREN”

“TO FORCE RAID WORK”

“WON’T WORK IN ALERT”

“WON’T WORK IN ALERTS”

“SIREN WILL STOP WORK”

“THEY WILL TAKE XMAS LEAVE”

Secondly, many of the demands made—better A.R.P., protection from glass, and so on—have been proper and urgent demands: the industrial worker is in the front line, and it is disgusting that any financial consideration, any fear of reducing profits, should interfere with the maximum safety possible for him in the circumstances. In this matter, some employers have been grossly unimaginative, and some others (not, probably, many) unpatriotic to the point of Pétainism: but it is difficult to believe that a Socialist should join hands, however “objectively”, with a defeatist of the Right.

Thirdly, Communists have in this case also been perfectly sincere in demanding these reforms for their own sake. Their sincerity in these tactics, in fact, dovetails perfectly with their sincerity in the grander strategy—which, “in this imperialist war”, is to hit “their own” Government in its most vulnerable spot. The *Daily Worker*, indeed, made the point very simply and effectively a day or two before these pages were sent to press (January 14th). Referring to the People’s Convention, it said that the charge “of the exploitation of grievances for ulterior purposes” was “silly”, because “popular movements never separate the living issues of the moment from the wider, ultimate aims”.

Exactly.

### SPOTTERS

Consider, by way of example, the “spotter” episode. On August 31st the *Daily Worker*, in the course of an excellent



leader on the need for decentralising the warning system, wrote as follows :

“Factory workers have already taken steps to establish a system of ‘watchers’, and in many areas residents have found it essential to take similar action. This commendable initiative, which means the saving of lives and must be widely extended, is a clear example of the part that the people and the local councils have to play in a new warning system.”

The spotter system became a Government system. Though capable, no doubt, of improvement (where, for instance, the men did not appoint their own spotters, their demand that they should was in most cases valid) it “worked”: it combined reasonable safety for personnel with reasonable maintenance of production. Whereupon Councillor Jack Owen, who is on the Editorial Board of the *Daily Worker* and contributes a weekly *Workshop Talk*, wrote on September 21st under the “feature” headline “WHO’D BE A SPOTTER?” :

“In the shops workers are now beginning to analyse the working of the ‘roof spotter’ scheme. Comments from these practical-minded persons provide much merriment.

“There is little doubt that even the ones who sponsor the scheme are going to find enormous difficulty in putting it into practice.

“Resolutions are coming in from all over rejecting the scheme. One from a very large aircraft factory contains a refusal to even consider the scheme until the entire A.R.P. arrangements are overhauled and put on a sound basis.

“Another very large factory asks, pertinently, if the military people require elaborate instruments to detect the approach of enemy aircraft, what chance has a hastily trained spotter equipped with a pair of field glasses?

“And from the convenor of yet another large concern I get the statement that ten miles is the farthest distance

from which, with field glasses, you can spot aircraft, and as a bomber flies at the rate of four miles to the minute there is not going to be much time for the spotter to make up his mind which way the plane is going and to warn his mates in time for them to get to shelter.

"It is a comforting thought that Sir John Anderson cannot fool men who are reasoning like this.

"The comment I have heard most is typical of the thoughtfulness and generosity of our class; it is a pity for the man who takes the job on and a doubt as to whether men can be found who will be willing to accept the responsibility of holding their mates' lives in their hands, with so little technical equipment to assist them to a correct decision."

The lesson is driven home by a letter on the same page:

"I find that in the factories the workers are divided as to whether to stop work and take shelter or to go in for spotters.

"What is wanted is thousands of leaflets giving the reasons why they should take shelter . . ."

But there are some establishments in which it is positively desirable to keep production going—notably the premises of the *Daily Worker*. So Mr. Walter Holmes makes this appeal in his "Worker's Notebook" of October 4th:

"During these days of 'Alerts' about every two hours, our roof-spotters play a very important part in helping to supply your *Daily Worker* on time. Production goes on until the men on the roof give us the red light.

"It doesn't stop then, but is transferred to the shelter. But the amount of interruption caused by this process depends on accuracy of observation by the watchers. Wherein lies the point of this story.

"The other day masses of cloud drifted over the city roofs—a perfect sky for raiders to dodge about in. The

light was grey, uncertain and constantly changing. The sound of planes above the clouds rose and fell bafflingly.

“Suddenly three flying bodies, apparently in formation, shot through the clouds. The watcher darted to the switch and, obedient to the red light, we went below.

“Later we learned that it was a flight of birds which had deceived the watcher. At this time of year, flights of birds are common enough, and, in bad light, are liable to deceive anyone. Even in brilliant tropical light, I have momentarily mistaken gliding hawks for bombers.

“So what our roof-spotters need is binoculars. That’s the tip. Nothing very special wanted: just a serviceable pair—prismatics for preference, of course. Can anyone oblige?”

### THE SERVICES

Finally, a violent agitation was worked up during this period about conditions in the Army, Navy and Air Force. After preliminary skirmishing, letters were invited from serving readers, and the campaign got seriously under way on November 21st, when a complete “soldiers’ page” appeared. Thereafter this was a regular weekly feature. Here are some extracts:

“I have read with interest the correspondence on the bad food in the Army, but I guarantee that the food at this R.A.F. depot would beat anything the Army has to offer. It is quite revolting and the very thought of it makes my stomach turn over.” (September 9th.)

“‘WE ARE NOT TREATED LIKE HUMAN BEINGS’  
say SOLDIERS DEMANDING better  
PAY, LEAVE AND CONDITIONS” (November 2nd)

“ . . . We are confronted with intimidation for the slightest triviality, which is in no way insubordination in

its simplest form. . . . They say an army marches on its stomach. Well, the British Army is going to be dead by the time the war really starts, if they feed all the men the way they do down here.—PRIVATE, SEARCHLIGHT REGIMENT.” (November 2nd.)

“What Berger disclosed at the Trades Union Congress is nothing to the whole story of sabotage, waste and criminal negligence, inefficiency and stupidity that characterises the running of our Army. I have never been so angry in all my life as during the past couple of weeks; the men in our Company (typical of all the other Companies in our battalion) are reaching boiling point.” (November 2nd.)

“Many complaints are heard of army food. There seems to be plenty of it, but it is the horrible way it is cooked.” (November 14th.)

“We felt like convicts, hurt and helpless. . . . We all felt hopelessly wretched—the military machine was doing its work. . . . The sanitary conditions were disgusting. . . . Although many came into the Army with sincere anti-Fascist feelings, it was astonishing to see how quickly they lost sight of the purpose of the war in the isolated world of parades, drills, petty restrictions. . . . When we read the papers we always felt that the civilians were much more interested in the war than we were. The conditions in the Army seemed to have a sobering effect on our patriotic enthusiasm. The camp conditions were becoming unbearable. . . . It is the most intelligent and enlightened Army the British Government has ever raised. It has a strong social outlook. Many of them have no illusions about the aims of the war . . .” (November 21st.)

“We don’t seem to have a job or a reason for being here, so we just muck about.” (November 21st.)

“We had six officers and their men here, and they were frequently drunk. Their attitude to the men was disgusting, ordering them about as if they were the dirt beneath their feet.” (November 21st.)

“Conditions here are very bad. The food is terrible, and we have to stand up to eat it; we can’t see what we are eating, for there is only a little lamp.” (November 21st.)

“We never imagined we could be put into a cold sweat by a tarnished coat button. It is like school again, but with all punishments and no prizes, hanging upon the words of our sergeant, scheming how to break bounds for a glimpse of our wives—the routine is such as to make even the mind a dull khaki.—TANKS.” (November 28th.)

“Training conditions in certain R.A.F. camps are driving the men desperate.” (November 28th.)

“But the men, from all walks of life, are beginning to think. Everywhere the comment is heard, ‘We wouldn’t stand for this in a factory.’—R.A.F.”

“Conditions on the troop-carrier I was on were appalling; overcrowding was extreme and the food was so bad that it nearly resulted in a riot. Most of the time we were living on bad fish, stinking kippers, bully beef, rotten meat and in general the food would make admirable pig swill. . . . Naturally, as a result of these conditions, agitation was rife and political discussion was being carried on. . . . I believe that when the troops on leave return, with the news of what has happened in England during

these past few months, there will be extreme discontent among the Forces.—SOLDIER FROM OVERSEAS.” (November 28th.)

“Soldiers working at clearing the débris in the West End . . . are not getting enough food to feed a child. . . . These men told me they were fed up with the Army and would like their ticket. Some remarked that they are robbing their fathers and fellow trade unionists doing this job. They thought they joined the Army to soldier, not to scab. The work and the food here are a disgrace to our fighting forces and a damnable shame on our National Government.” (November 28th.)

“It is no exaggeration to say that on some days and nights here, the chaps have real pains of hunger when lying down at night.” (November 28th.)

“The most honest action of the Government in this war was to warn us, ‘Your freedom is in peril’. How right they were has been proved to millions of us by a year’s experience in the Army.—DUNKIRK.” (December 27th.)

“When we read the papers shouting about democracy and how the men of our forces know what they’re fighting for, it makes us laugh. It would be extremely difficult for them to try to put such talk over to us men, because it wouldn’t make sense. There is no democracy in the Army, and how we know it.” (December 27th.)

“The view of the boys in training was all for the war, but in the real Navy it changes and the vast majority of conscripts want to get back home.—RATING.” (December 27th.)

This series of extracts has not been carefully selected for the purpose of proving a case: *every* letter is of this type. Not

one is to be found which suggests either that there is a single redeeming feature in army life, or that boredom and discomfort, vital though it is to reduce them to a minimum, are inseparable from the beastly business of war, which is war no less because it is being waged to save the world from the even beastlier business of fascism. And however bad conditions may be in the fighting services, however stupid and reactionary many of the officers, however necessary and imperative the reforms demanded by these soldiers,<sup>1</sup> can it be imagined for a moment that the main purpose of the correspondence is other than to stir up class and revolutionary feeling against the Government and the officers representing it, with the object of "embarrassing" them in their conduct of the "rich men's war"? Would any instructed Communist attempt, or wish, to deny it?

### THE PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

Just as the "alarm and despondency" campaign was one form under which the "revolutionary defeatism" of the C.P. was developed, so is its organisation of the "People's Convention" another. For that the C.P. is the initiator, organiser and controller of that Convention no one but a political illiterate can have the smallest doubt. Let those who have been misled about the origins and purpose of the Convention ask themselves a simple question—*why, among its six points and throughout the long explanatory manifesto that accompanies them, is there not a single reference to the necessity of preventing our defeat by the greatest of all menaces to liberty, socialism, and the working class today—Adolf Hitler?*

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As we go to press there comes the interesting news that,

<sup>1</sup> For an obviously true and unbiassed account of a conscript's life today, with its good points and its bad, see *What! No Morning Tea?* by Anthony Cotterell, just published. As to food, the real fact is that, bad though the cooking often is, the quantity has in general been found—by the soldiers—to be excessive.

whoever else may have been misled, the German Government at least has no doubt about the real meaning of the "People's Convention" movement, or about what its effect would be if it attained a serious measure of success. From the *Manchester Guardian* of January 2nd:

"The following extract from a recent English broadcast from a Nazi station (purporting to be run by British workers addressing British workers) is an interesting example of the German technique of propaganda. [Mr. Ivor Montagu warned Communists, in the *Daily Worker* of November 18th, against listening to these Nazi "fake 'Workers' Radios'", which, "cunningly and often cleverly devised," tended to "provocation and incitement". V.G.] It will be seen that Communist activities here are seized on as helpful to German aims:

"On New Year's Day there is to be a people's meeting to start a campaign for the people's movement. There's to be a People's Vigilance Committee which will keep tabs on the capitalist pirates. Of course the unions have been warned against this movement, and that's the best proof that it really means to do something. We're not going to pass any final judgment on it as yet, although we are following the preliminary organisation with keen interest. But one thing we are going to say here and now: That this movement must be protected from the Government repression and police brutality.

"As soon as this popular movement begins to function Churchill and Morrison will try to squash it with imprisonments. We've got to stop that. We've got to say hands off free speech and free demonstrations. And, remember, we hold the whip hand. The moment the Government, the moment the capitalist gang try to beat down workers who demand a popular movement, that's the time to come out and strike. That's the time to show that we ain't fighting this war to make Morrison a Himmler or Churchill a Hitler.



Lose no time. We would urge you to come out right away and stop the war. It's within your power, but, anyhow, make this clear that there be no suppression, no bullying, and no denial of free speech to the workers. If the Government go too far it can convert a peaceful strike into a bloody revolution.' "

## CHAPTER V

# THE PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

By JOHN STRACHEY

*January 1941*

THE MAIN EFFORT of the Communist Party of Great Britain has been directed during the past six months to organising the "People's Convention", which met at the Royal Hotel, London, on January 12th, 1941. And for some time in the future the main effort of the Communist Party will be directed to popularising and spreading throughout the country a movement which, it is hoped, has been initiated at that Convention.

When it is said that it is the Communist Party that is organising the Convention, and is now conducting a drive to create a movement around the Convention's decisions, this does not mean that all the people who attended the Convention, or who may now take part in the movement, are Communists. Nor does it mean that there was anything wicked or sinister on the part of the Communists in organising this Convention and attempting to spread this movement. The Communist Party had a perfect right to organise the People's Convention and to attempt to persuade non-Communists to take part in this work with them. But it does mean that the Central Committee of the Communist Party decides, wholly and solely, the policy of both the Convention and of the subsequent movement—the forms of organisation, the tactics and the leadership which are employed throughout. This may seem a somewhat sweeping

statement, but no one who has experience of present-day political life can question it. Again, this statement is not in the nature of an accusation against the Communist Party. On the contrary, it is a considerable tribute to its energy, persistence, power of managing men and movements. But the leadership which at the beginning was given to the Convention, the methods adopted for its organisation, the publicity conferred upon it in the columns of the Communist Party's official organ, the *Daily Worker*, all leave not the slightest doubt that it is a fact.

#### RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The Convention is led by three men, Mr. D. N. Pritt, Mr. Harry Adams and Mr. Squance. I have not the faintest idea whether these three men are members of the Communist Party or not; but it is certain that they completely identify themselves, in all essentials, with the present policy of that Party, and that their leadership of the Convention is based on this identity. It may be asked whether the non-Communist members of the Convention, if they disagreed with the policies proposed by their Communist colleagues, could not, being, as they no doubt are, a considerable majority, overrule the Communists, capture the Convention and determine its policies. Experience of several similar movements organised by the Communist Party shows that, on the contrary, if this were to happen (and it is possible, though very difficult, that it might be done), the Communist members of the Convention would not hesitate for a moment to cripple or wreck it rather than let it get out of their control; nor is there any doubt that they hold positions, such as organisers, secretaries, members of executive committees, etc., to enable them to do this. Moreover, they are, from their point of view, quite right in maintaining so tight a control as to enable them to destroy

any united front body (as these bodies are called) rather than let it get out of hand.

All that this means is that it is utterly impossible for us to determine our attitude to the People's Convention without determining our attitude to the Communist Party and its present policies. For in the long run what the People's Convention does or attempts will be wholly determined by what the Communist Party desires it to do or to attempt. On the other hand, the policies and pronouncements of the People's Convention will not be put in identical words, nor will carry an identical sense, to those of the Communist Party. There would, indeed, be little object in organising such a body as the People's Convention if this were so. The object of the creation of the People's Convention is to have what is called a broad body; it is organised, that is to say, because the leaders of the Communist Party realise that the vast majority of the British working class will not accept the Communist Party as it is organised today, nor, above all, the present "revolutionary defeatist" policy of that Party. If these leaders believed that there was any chance whatever of the masses directly joining the Communist Party itself, and consciously accepting the revolutionary defeatist policy, then they would not dream of organising any such bodies as the People's Convention. But since they know that it is quite impossible to induce the mass of the British working class to adopt, and above all to carry out, the revolutionary defeatist policy (as that policy has been described and defined in these pages), the necessity of a broader united-front body of this type arises.

The objective of the organisation of the People's Convention, for example, is, precisely, to induce a decisive mass of the British working class to carry out, in actual practice, the revolutionary defeatist policy of the Communist Party, *without it being necessary for them to realise what they are doing*. If we turn to the six-point policy adopted by the Convention

we shall see how the matter has been arranged. The six points are as follows:

1. Defence of the people's living standards.
2. Defence of the people's democratic and trade union rights.
3. Adequate air-raid precautions, deep, bomb-proof shelters, re-housing and relief of victims.
4. Friendship with the Soviet Union.
5. A people's government truly representative of the whole people and able to inspire the confidence of the working people of the world.
6. A people's peace that gets rid of the causes of war.

#### NO MENTION OF RESISTANCE TO THE NAZIS

Let us analyse these points. We may take (1) and (2) together—namely, the defence of the people's living conditions and the defence of the people's democratic and trade union rights. Now, no one within the Labour movement can possibly object to these two demands; indeed, we shall all feel the strongest possible sympathy with them. It is only when we come to consider, not that these two points are included in the demands of the People's Convention, *but that certain other points are not included*; it is only when we come to consider the period and situation in which these points were adopted, that we shall come to feel very differently about the matter.

If the reader will look back at the six points, the first thing which he will be struck by is that nowhere is there the slightest mention of there being any necessity to prevent the conquest of the British people by the Nazis. Now, the Nazis, as the Communist Party frequently affirms, are the fanatical representatives of German monopoly finance capitalism. Hence the omission must seem remarkable. Yet the reader may feel that it is not particularly significant.

Perhaps the need to prevent a Nazi conquest is taken for granted, and the Convention merely concerns itself with those other issues which non-working-class bodies neglect?

But let us recollect the situation in which these six points were adopted. They were adopted by the signatories of the original manifesto issued last July, "in accordance with the views expressed at the London Conference of July 7th, 1940". Let us particularly notice that date, July 1940. It is the plainest possible statement of fact that in July 1940 the British people stood in greater danger of total conquest and enslavement by the ruthless representatives of a foreign monopoly capitalism than they have ever before stood in their history. At that moment, the Nazis, having destroyed the French Republic, were completing their conquest of Continental Europe. The British Army had escaped, disorganised and disarmed, from the continental *débâcle*; the criminal neglect of earlier Governments had left this country almost fantastically short of even the most elementary weapons of war; our Air Force faced an extreme disparity in numbers; our cities were within twenty minutes flying distance of the nearer German air-fields stretched along the whole western borders of the Continent; Hitler was announcing, as the last of a series of prophecies every one of which had up to that time been fulfilled, that he would enter London on August 15th; the *Daily Worker* had itself just announced that "the situation facing the British people was ghastly, nerve-shattering" and that "Britain was threatened with invasion".

*It was in that situation that the six points of the People's Convention were adopted, without any mention whatever of there being any need to prevent the subjugation of the British people to German monopoly capitalism.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am aware that the present leader of the Communist Party, Mr. Palme Dutt, now tells us that the danger of German invasion and conquest last summer was all our imagination, or rather that it was a scare put about by Mr. Churchill in order to induce the British workers to work long hours turning

## THE CHINESE PARALLEL

We must ask, then, what is the meaning of omitting, *in such a situation as that*, any mention whatever of the need to prevent our subjugation to German monopoly capitalism? We must also ask what is the meaning, in such a situation, of putting the defence of the people's living standards as the first demand of a new policy? Perhaps we may be able to see what the effect of such a demand must be, and is intended to be, in such a situation, by comparing it with the policy adopted by the Communist Party in relation to another people faced with the danger of Fascist conquest.

Now, the Chinese people are facing as great, but probably not greater, danger of total subjugation to a Fascist conqueror, in this case Japan, as do the British people today. (The danger of a total Japanese conquest of China is, I should estimate, very considerably less than was the danger of a total Nazi subjugation of the British people last summer when the six points were adopted.) Moreover, the Chinese people are governed by a leader, Chiang-Kai-Shek, in some respects comparable to Mr. Churchill. But Chiang-Kai-Shek and his colleagues have records of reaction which it would certainly bring me within the laws of libel to attribute to Mr. Churchill and his colleagues. After all, we cannot say that the members of the present British Government have executed many thousands of leading British

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out armaments in the factories. He, no doubt, tells us that all the reports of British reconnaissance and bombing pilots that the ports of Europe, from Narvik to Bordeaux, held flotillas of boats whose only possible purpose was to transport troops to this country, and that the main striking force of the German Army and Air Force was concentrated on the springboard of the Channel Ports, were fakes written up in No. 10, Downing Street. After all, we did not see those boats with our own eyes. One only waits for the next development of Mr. Dutt's views, when he will no doubt announce that all the air fighting which took place over London and the Home Counties was a stage display between rival British aircraft, designed to impress our foolish minds, and that the bombs which, in our innocence, we thought we heard dropping amongst us were mere figments of our imagination, overheated by Mr. Churchill's delusive oratory.

Communists in cold blood, or have sent eight separate armed punitive expeditions against the British Communist Party. The present leaders of the Chinese Government have done both these things to the Chinese Communists. In spite of this fact, the Chinese Communist Party, perfectly rightly in my view, supports with all its strength the struggle of Chiang-Kai-Shek and the present Chinese Government against the Japanese invaders.

Now, what should we say if somebody in China, say the famous 8th Route Army, which is organised, staffed and controlled by the Chinese Communist Party, suddenly gave up fighting the Japanese and held a "People's Convention", in which its first demand was the defence of the Chinese people's living standards? It is perfectly clear, and admitted by everyone, that the necessity of defending China against the Japanese invasion has demanded sacrifices from the Chinese people, including a lowering of their living standards. These sacrifices have, indeed, been almost unimaginably greater than any which British workers have endured. And yet, again rightly in my view, the Chinese Communists have actively collaborated with and supported the Government which has had to impose these sacrifices on the Chinese people; for the only alternative was surrender to Japan. Therefore, should we not know just what the Chinese Communists were doing if the 8th Route Army suddenly turned round and, in this situation, demanded that the Chinese Government should raise the living standards of the Chinese people? Should we not immediately know that for some reason the Chinese Communist Party had reversed its present policy of supporting all resistance to Japan, and had adopted the alternative "revolutionary defeatist" policy of attempting to thwart in every possible way the war effort of the Chinese Government?

Exactly the same thing is, of course, true in the case of Great Britain. If, in a moment of supreme crisis in which the



independent existence of the people itself is at stake, you put forward, as your leading demand, the defence of the people's living standards, and if you do so without one qualifying word as to the necessity of preventing that people's subjugation to their foreign Fascist foe, you are, for good or ill, ranging yourself behind the revolutionary defeatist policy.

The hard fact is that, for those of us who think that it did matter whether or not Hitler entered London on August 15th last, too large, and not too small, a proportion of the British productive effort was at that time going into peace-time consumers' goods as against armaments. It is a grim fact that has to be faced that if we really mean to prevent ourselves from being conquered and enslaved, we have got to go without a great many things. A certain limited number of ships can import into this country either meat from the Argentine or steel, aeroplanes, machine-guns, and tanks from the United States, but not both. If you demand that the standard of life, including for example the normal consumption of meat, of the people of this country must be "defended", i.e. maintained at all costs, you are definitely demanding that fewer aeroplanes, fewer tons of steel, fewer machine guns, fewer tanks should be brought to this country. It may be that you will continue to demand your meat; but if so you must, unless you are totally reckless of all consequences, have decided that the conquest of this country by the Nazis does not matter.

All this does not mean, of course, that vitally important issues of *who* is to bear the sacrifices necessary to the prevention of conquest of this country, do not arise. The question of *whose* belt is to be tightened, the question of whether, and to what extent, the indispensable sacrifices cannot be put on to the richer sections of the population, who can bear them well, the question of whether the poorest sections of the population cannot perfectly well have their standard

of life, not only defended, but actually raised, and whether such a raising would not actually increase our war effort, are quite another matter. In my opinion the Labour Movement ought to be putting up a more vigorous struggle than it is putting up on precisely these issues. But the fact that it is not doing so is by no means wholly the fault of the Labour members of the Government and the other leaders of the Labour Party. It is, above all, the fault of the Communist Party and the other supporters of the People's Convention. They have chosen to direct their great energies into a campaign which no one but a dolt could fail to recognise as part and parcel of their general effort to secure the defeat of this country at the hands of the Nazis by hampering our war effort, in the fatuous belief that having then seized power they will be able to defend the "Socialist fatherland" from the Nazis, or combine with the German Communists to overthrow the imperialists everywhere, or negotiate a peace with Hitler which could in fact be nothing but capitulation. The demand that, in principle, and without qualification, the British people must be asked to make no sacrifices in order to turn resources on to the job of fighting the Nazis, is unquestionably a well-directed attempt to further that object of securing defeat. Anyone who does not realise that the first point of the People's Convention is put forward with this objective is deluding himself.

The third demand is for adequate air-raid protection, deep bomb-proof shelters, re-housing and relief of victims. Here, at any rate, is a demand with which we can agree, nor is there anything necessarily defeatist about it. On the contrary, proper air-raid protection of this type would have been an immensely valuable contribution to the resistance of this country to air attack. Moreover, it is a bitter comment on the lack of initiative, drive and resolution shown by the rest of the Labour Movement that the voicing of this demand has been left so largely to the Communist

Party. The result has been that the demand for shelter has been largely associated in people's minds with a defeatist policy. The demand for shelter was voiced for nine months by a Party whose other principal demand was "Stop the war", and which today, though it does not now voice that demand, is pursuing a policy which is designed to "stop the war" by producing our defeat, and so enabling it to negotiate a peace with Germany.

The fourth point is friendship with the Soviet Union. Here again is something with which all of us can agree. But the way in which this demand is voiced profoundly misrepresents the actual situation in which we find ourselves. For obvious reasons the Soviet Government is profoundly hostile to Great Britain and has leant heavily on to the German side throughout the war. It may, of course, be claimed that this is entirely because of the reactionary character of the British Government and the anti-Soviet policy which that Government has, undoubtedly, pursued; that the appearance of a new Government in Britain would immediately change all this. Even if we agree, however, that a new British Government could secure a far more friendly attitude on the part of the Soviet Government, there remains the question of the policy of the Soviet Government in regard to Nazi Germany. Ten-year treaties of peace and friendship, extensive commercial agreements involving long-term contracts of every description, have now been entered into by the Soviet Government with the Nazi Government. I do not pretend to know of the extent to which a complete reversal of all this on the part of the Soviet Government, for the sake of a Left-Wing Government in Britain, would be practicable or conceivable. All this is no reason whatever for not struggling for the establishment of an administration in this country which would pursue a very different policy to the Soviet Union from that pursued by successive administrations till now. But it is a reason for looking at the question very

differently from the way in which it is approached by Communists.

### WHAT IS A PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT?

The fifth demand reads: "A People's Government truly representative of the whole people and able to inspire the confidence of the working people of the world." Here again is something upon the desirability of which we may all agree. Here the only difficulty is one of omission. The character and the mode of establishing such a Government certainly need clarification. According to the only evidence available, that of a recent Gallup Poll, Mr. Churchill's leadership of the Government and the nation is supported by over 80 per cent. of the adult population. This is the highest percentage of support for a leader of a Government that the Gallup Poll has ever discovered in any investigation ever taken in any country in any circumstances. It may be, of course, that this support is quite mistaken, and the Communist Party has a perfect right to try to persuade the British people to withdraw their support. But the implication of the demand for a People's Government is that the entire British people is straining to overthrow the present administration and replace it by one formed from, presumably, the leaders of the People's Convention. This does not appear to be the case.

### WHAT IS A PEOPLE'S PEACE?

We now come to the sixth and crucial demand, "A people's peace that gets rid of the causes of war." There is no explanation of this demand in the original manifesto, but Mr. D. N. Pritt, in his pamphlet, *Forward to a People's Government*, gives us some important information as to what is meant by this demand. He writes:

"A People's Government in Britain would know that its first duty to the people was to secure the earliest possible termination of hostilities by a peace that was neither one

of conquest nor one of capitulation, but a peace that safeguarded the interests of the peoples and enabled them to build a new world without war and economic crises.

“It would therefore immediately propose such a peace to the peoples of the world, on the terms: ‘No annexations of any country by any country. No indemnities by any country to any country. The peoples to determine their own destiny and form of government.’ ”

This is the only indication of the peace terms which such a People's Government would propose. If Mr. Pritt's statement “No annexations of any country by any country; no indemnities by any country to any country; the peoples to determine their own destiny and form of government” means anything, it must mean, amongst other things, the evacuation on the part of Germany of the countries which she has annexed since the beginning of the war. (I do not quite see how Germany could not be asked to evacuate the two countries, Austria and Czechoslovakia, which she annexed before the beginning of the war also, but let that pass.) These countries are Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium and two-thirds of France. Therefore, what Mr. Pritt is in fact proposing is that a future British Government should state that it would make peace if and when Germany evacuated all these countries and returned to her 1939 borders.

The only comment necessary on this statement is that nine out of ten sane men in Britain will agree that we ought to make peace immediately that we could get such terms. Of course we ought to make peace instantly, if and when Germany renounces all her conquests and goes back within her own borders. As a matter of fact it is frequently stated that this is precisely the answer which Mr. Churchill and the present Government gave to the peace feelers which were put out by Hitler at the end of last summer, and in the early autumn. It is said that the British Government's reply to

these messages, which were sent through Madrid and Sweden, was that the British Government would immediately agree to an Armistice and a Peace Conference if and when the German Armies retired from their European conquests.

### WHAT WOULD IN FACT HAPPEN

But, of course, the Nazi Government would not dream of agreeing to peace on these terms. (This may be, indeed I think it is, a very good reason in favour of the British Government stating publicly that it would agree to a cessation of hostilities on these conditions, but that is another matter.) Do Mr. Pritt, the Communist Party and other supporters of the People's Convention tell us that the fact of a Leftward change of Government in this country would make the renunciation of all their conquests more acceptable to the Nazis? What Mr. Pritt would answer is indicated on the next page of his pamphlet. He goes on to say that the British Government must not only demand this evacuation of its conquests from Germany, but must itself free Ireland and India. Here again is something with which I for one agree. Mr. Pritt then proceeds:

“When a People's Government had offered peace on these terms, and proved the genuineness of its intentions by applying the terms at once to those countries under its direct control, is it not clear that Hitler and the ruling class of Germany would be unable to persuade their workers to carry on the war against a British Government which no longer held any menace for them, which had no imperialist aims, and was offering an immediate and just peace? Is it not almost certain that such action on the part of the working people of Britain, and the prospect of such a peace, would at once release all the pent-up hatred for the ruling class of Germany that has been growing among the German workers since long before the Hitler

régime was set up? Is it not almost certain that the coming to power of a People's Government in Britain would be the signal for decisive action by the French, Austrian, Czech and other workers to throw off their oppressors? Would not the German Government, even if not immediately succeeded by a German People's Government, be compelled to accept the armistice and the terms of the peace proposed, or face immediate and widespread revolt among the German and all other peoples whom it now rules?"

The answer to this series of questions is "No". It is not clear that "Hitler and the ruling class of Germany would be unable to persuade their workers to carry on the war in these circumstances". It is not "almost certain" that (to put Mr. Pritt's questions in other words) a revolution here would produce a parallel revolution in Germany, or would be the signal for decisive action by the French, Austrian, Czech and other workers under German domination. If these things were "almost certain" instead of improbable to the point of impossibility, then indeed the revolutionary defeatist road would be a practicable one.

The reasons why it must be clear to everyone of us who has not lost his capacity for calm judgment that there is no possibility of this synchronised revolution, as we may call it, in all the belligerent countries today, have been given in detail elsewhere in these pages. Briefly, this prospect of synchronised revolution is based on a profound underestimate both of the capacity of a Fascist Government and the potency of modern military weapons and methods.

*The unescapable fact is that the outbreak of revolution, with its inevitable accompanying civil war in this country, would be the signal, not for a popular revolt in Germany and elsewhere against the Nazis, but for the instant, and instantly successful, total conquest of these islands by the Nazi Air Force, Fleet and Army.*

The German people would hear of the outbreak, first of all as great strikes, then of rioting, then of actual civil war in Britain, wholly and solely through Dr. Goebbels' propaganda machine. They would hear of it wholly and solely in the form of the long-expected crack-up of British resistance. Are we then to be told that in that moment of final and absolute Nazi triumph, when every promise of successful conquest which Hitler had ever made to the German people was being fulfilled, when the Nazis were in the very act of becoming the overlords of the whole world, the German people, who so far have stood everything, would rise in revolt?

It is perhaps a little more conceivable that the outbreak of revolution in Great Britain would encourage the peoples of the territories already conquered by Germany to *wish* to revolt. Mr. Pritt says in the next paragraph of his pamphlet that the People's Government in Britain "would have the most powerful allies in Europe—the working class of every country". But unfortunately it is mere words to say that the working class of Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium and occupied France is the most powerful ally which we could have in Europe. These people are wholly and totally disarmed; they are helpless in the face of German tanks and bombing aeroplanes. Millions of men can be held down today by a hundredth part of the armed forces which it took to do so even twenty-five years ago, before the development of modern weapons of war. Moreover, it is, as a matter of fact, very doubtful whether the majority of the conquered peoples would in fact regard a revolution in this country as a signal for them to attempt to revolt. Is it not more probable that they would regard it as what their German masters would tell them it was, the death agony of the last effort at organised resistance to German domination?

It may be, however, that Mr. Pritt would answer that all these considerations are based on a misrepresentation of his case. He may say that it is not the case that he proposes



that his People's Government should come to power by means of revolutionary action, i.e. by means of strikes in war industries, outbreaks in industrial cities, mutinies in the armed forces, leading up to civil war. He may tell us that his People's Government is to come to power in some constitutional way, which will induce both the Conservative and Labour Parties, which now maintain the present Government, to resign power into the hands of the new People's Government without a deadly struggle which must tear to pieces our capacity for resistance to the Nazis. No word is anywhere said as to what other means except revolution could be conceived of as bringing the People's Government to power. Indeed, it is almost impossible to think of any such means by which a movement led and inspired by the methods adopted by the Communist Party for the organisation of the People's Convention could come to power. Or do the leaders of the Communist Party now tell us that the governing class of Britain will resign its power to them without an armed struggle? This would indeed be the most extraordinary reversal of all the reversals of attitude which they have ever made. Hitherto, at any rate, they have laid it down as an axiom that no governing class will yield power without pushing the conflict to the point of civil war.

In my opinion they have over-simplified the real prospect in this respect very greatly, but they would certainly make an equal and opposite error if they now told us that, in the midst of a desperate war, the British governing class would yield power, without the most bitter struggle imaginable, to a Communist movement.

### THE REAL WAY TO DO THE JOB

For my part, I believe that it would, and ultimately will, be possible for the people's forces in Britain to assume more and more power without precipitating revolution and civil war in the face of the enemy. But in order to do this they

must make an almost exactly opposite approach to the task to that being made by the Communist Party by means of this People's Convention. The British workers and people's forces must, above all, make it clear that they are not less, but more, determined than the ruling class to resist Nazi domination of the world. In other words, they must adopt the original "War on two fronts" policy. They must lead and direct their agitation against many of those who are at present in power, just because they are hampering and thwarting our struggle against world fascism. They must expose the undoubted fact that the sympathies of many key men in the ruling class today are, to say the least of it, divided; that a victory over Germany and every other form of fascism is to them an unwelcome thing in many respects; that men such as these are worse than useless to us for the purposes of the present war. Again, they must show that every piece of exploitation, profiteering, and injustice in the factories, must be fought against, exposed and ended, precisely because it is helping to produce a Hitler victory. They need not hesitate, even, to encourage and support strike action in particular places, in order, for example, to end intolerable conduct on the part of particular managements. It is better to hold up even munitions production for a short time, if by doing so intolerable conditions are ended and the opportunity for really wholehearted work obtained: but that is totally different from holding up munitions for defeatist ends.

If the struggle were undertaken in this way and in this spirit, then indeed it would be possible to carry with us the whole people, including the armed forces, to an ever greater extent. Along these lines it is possible to see the perspective of a people's movement so united, so wide, so all-embracing, that it will be able to take over, first in this respect and then in that, effective power in this country, without there ever being occasion or opportunity for the outbreak of civil war

in the face of the enemy. It is only if that kind of approach is made that we shall ever obtain the support of the mass of the British workers themselves. It is quite true, of course, that the support of tens of thousands of workers can be obtained for the type of agitation proposed by the People's Convention. But it is equally true that millions of workers, both inside and outside the armed forces, will have nothing whatever to do with an agitation which, however much they may sympathise with its actual demands, seems to them (and rightly) to have as its inevitable consequence the defeat of this country by Hitler. Therefore the People's Convention type of campaign, even if it could succeed in producing revolutionary conditions in this country, could only do so with the working class profoundly and irrevocably divided—the one situation which Lenin and every other great revolutionary has always regarded as absolutely fatal to success.

### CONCLUSION

The conclusions to which we are driven by this analysis of the People's Convention are, then, as follows:

First, that the People's Convention is an integral part of the general revolutionary defeatist work now being undertaken by the British Communist Party.

Second, that the pursuance of a revolutionary defeatist policy cannot possibly lead to a Socialist Britain; that it can only lead to a Nazi-dominated Britain. Anyone who supports the People's Convention and its campaign, whatever their intentions may be, is then "facilitating", in Lenin's words, the defeat of Britain at the hands of the Nazis.

The Communist Party of Great Britain, of course, is well aware that the campaign of the People's Convention is designed for this purpose. It does not mind, because it believes that a British defeat would not mean a Hitler victory but a

Communist victory. But this delusion has been exhaustively exposed. However, a number—not a very great number perhaps, but still a number—of first-rate, extremely sincere, energetic and very influential shop stewards, trade unionists, and other members of the Labour Movement are supporting, or may be induced to support, the campaign of the People's Convention without for one moment realising that the effect of work directed along these lines can only be to produce a Nazi Britain.

NOTE V

“WE FIGHT FOR LIFE”

EARLY in NOVEMBER the Communist Party published, as a kind of ideological basis for the “People’s Convention” movement, a pamphlet by R. Palme Dutt entitled *We Fight for Life*. Here is what the *Daily Worker* wrote on November 15th:

“All arrangements are now complete for one of the greatest political campaigns ever organised by the British Communist Party, a member of the Party’s Secretariat told the *Daily Worker* yesterday.

“The central theme of the campaign will be the fight of the Communist Party for the lives and happiness of the working people of Britain.

“In the course of it the Party will give its fullest support to the campaign associated with the People’s Convention, called for January 12, in conformity with the whole record of the Party in helping forward all mass movements, aiming to improve the immediate conditions of the working people and strengthen their fight for the defeat of the present Government and the coming to power of a Government of a new type—a People’s Government.

“Special importance is attached throughout the whole course of the campaign to the new pamphlet written by R. P. Dutt called ‘We Fight for Life’; the first 25,000 are off the Press, and in this pamphlet the whole policy of the Communist Party is explained in Dutt’s most effective and striking manner.

“It is around the general line of this pamphlet that the Party campaign will be carried out, and record sales are expected, as well as recruiting for the Communist Party.”

## CHAPTER VI

### R. PALME DUTT *v.* HARRY POLLITT

By A LABOUR CANDIDATE

December 1940

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of Great Britain has issued two pamphlets defining its attitude to the war. The first was Harry Pollitt's *How to Win the War*, issued in September 1939. The second is Mr. R. Palme Dutt's *We Fight for Life*, just out.

It is instructive to compare what these two leaders have to say on the main issues of the war.

#### WHAT IS THIS WAR?

"This war is a continuation of the war of 1914-18," says Mr. Palme Dutt. "It continues the war of Anglo-American imperialism and German imperialism. . . . It is a war of rival capitalist Great Powers, like the last war: a war for world domination: for the largest share in the exploitation of the world; for possessions, profits, markets and spheres of influence; for the new division of the world.

"Two world blocks of robber Powers are fighting one another in this war for world domination. . . .

"Those who see the main world division today as the division between Fascist and non-Fascist imperialist Powers (the borders between which grow daily less) are deluding themselves and deluding others. There are two main camps in the world today. On the one side the camp of the rising world of socialism; of the Soviet Union, of the working people in all the imperialist countries, of the Colonial peoples. On the other side, the camp of the imperialist exploiters, of finance-capital, of the rulers of the warring imperialist

Powers and their hangers-on. The first camp represent all the advancing forces of the future which will finally conquer the present chaos and misery."

"We are in support of all measures necessary to secure the victory of democracy over fascism," writes Mr. Pollitt, quoting the first Manifesto on the war of the Communist Party.

"The Communist Party supports the war, believing it to be a just war which should be supported by the whole working class and all friends of democracy in Britain.

"Why does the Communist Party support this war? It has always maintained, and still maintains, that the fundamental cause of war is the capitalist system. Nevertheless, as the Manifesto states:

"It has never hidden and never will hide its detestation of fascism and its readiness to take part in any struggle, political or military, to secure the defeat of fascism. For it recognises that the victory of fascism represents not only a conquest of markets, colonies, sources of raw materials, etc., it also leads to the forcible destruction of every democratic right and liberty that the working class has fought so bitterly, and at such cost and sacrifice, to win from its class enemies.

"It is this consideration that is uppermost in our minds now.

"For if these democratic gains were lost, this would represent a defeat for the working class, which, long after time had healed the wounds caused by the grief and suffering that war brings, would involve the most bitter struggles and sacrifices in the future to regain those rights and liberties which are essential for the advancement of the working class and the achievement of a socialist world, from which the menace of war will have been removed for ever."

"These fundamental principles of liberty, peace and socialism now at stake have determined the decision of the Communist Party. To stand aside from this conflict, to con-

tribute only revolutionary-sounding phrases while the fascist beasts ride rough-shod over Europe, would be betrayal of everything our forbears have fought to achieve in the course of long years of struggle against capitalism."

The whole of this argument is not refuted by Mr. Palme Dutt. It is simply ignored. The Communist Party of Great Britain no longer attaches importance to defending democracy against fascism. But it does not like to say so, for fear of having its own past thrown in its teeth and because it suspects that our workers do care about preserving their Trades Union rights and civil liberties from the treatment meted out to his victims by Hitler.

### DOES IT MATTER WHO WINS?

*Palme Dutt*: "The victory of imperialism, whether of one or the other camp, in this war—either of the German-Italian-Japanese combination or of the Anglo-American combination—would mean the victory of capitalism over the aspirations of the people . . . whichever side wins, if the imperialists remain in power, it can only lead, after years of destruction and slaughter, not to a victory of the people, but to a peace imposed on the peoples by the imperialists: a peace of enslavement and spoliation and oppression of nations."

*Harry Pollitt*: "The British workers are in this war to defeat Hitler, for a German victory would mean that fascism would be imposed on the defeated countries. If there is one thing that is certain, it is this, that the British working class detests fascism as it does those who in Britain have helped to strengthen it, and is determined to do everything in its power to bring about the defeat of fascism and that of its supporters in Britain. Therefore, it will do everything it can to bring the war to a speedy conclusion, but only by the defeat and destruction of Hitler and the Nazi rule from which the German people have been suffering for six years."

Harry Pollitt's argument that defeat would mean the



imposition of fascism has come true in France and the other defeated countries. It is not refuted by Palme Dutt, but simply ignored. It is a matter of indifference to the Communist Party leaders today whether Hitler is beaten or defeats us and imposes fascism here<sup>1</sup>—but they do not dare to tell the workers of this country that that really is their position; they are afraid of even attempting to explain why they have tacitly abandoned their previous concern to defend British democracy from being smashed by Fascist aggression, as continental democracies have been smashed.

### BRITAIN AND THE WAR

In defining this country's relation to the war there is the same incompatibility between the attitude of the Communist Party as defined by Mr. Dutt today and by Mr. Pollitt yesterday:

*Palme Dutt:* "The British ruling class are not fighting to liberate the people of Europe from fascism and reaction. They have always been, for a century and a half, the main stranglers of every popular revolution in every country.

"The war aims of Churchill, for which the British workers are asked to die, are the war aims of British imperialism, to protect and maintain the domination of the British Empire over a quarter of the world; to smash the rival German imperialism and inflict a new super-Versailles; to maintain the reactionary interests of capitalist class rule against the world Socialist Revolution. . . .

"They are preparing to strangle the Socialist Revolution in Europe with the aim finally to organise the war front against the Soviet Union (remember Finland). Wendell

<sup>1</sup> This sentence might be misinterpreted to mean something to which I must record my dissent. It would be wholly unfair to suggest that it is a matter of indifference to the C.P. leaders today whether Hitler is beaten or defeats "us": but it is certainly a matter of indifference to them whether "Hitler" defeats Britain or "Churchill" defeats Germany. As in the case of a previous chapter, this one should be read in the light of the explanation of defeatism given in Chapters I and IV.—*Editor.*

Willkie, Republican candidate for the Presidency of the United States, has declared that it is necessary to support a victory of British imperialism in order to defeat the menace of a Socialist Revolution in Europe." [Willkie never said any such thing—see below.]

*Harry Pollitt:* "The Communist Party has always stated that Britain, under its present rulers, would never do anything except for its own imperialist interests, and it has not changed this view. It is the same with France. But that does not alter the fact that British and French action at the present time can help the Polish people and in the long run preserve their independence and prevent them from being brought under Fascist rule. This is the actual situation, and whatever the motive of the present rulers of Britain and France, the action taken by them—under considerable pressure from their own peoples—is not only helping the Polish people's fight, but is actually, for the first time, challenging the Nazi aggression which has brought Europe into crisis after crisis for the last three years.

"Above all, the common people of Britain who have entered into the war, calm, deadly serious and prepared to make whatever sacrifices are necessary, do not in the slightest degree share any ulterior or imperialist motives which this Government may hold."

Mr. Pollitt expands his point:

"The Polish people have had no choice. War has been thrust upon them. They have had to fight to defend themselves from a foreign attack whose only purpose is to enslave them to Nazi Germany. The experiences of Austria and Czechoslovakia show what the German conquest of their country would mean.

"It is true that the Polish Government was reactionary in the extreme, and shameful in its attitude to the Polish Labour movement. But it is with the *people* of Poland that we are primarily concerned. If Hitler is allowed to impose his

domination on Poland, the people will be forced to accept conditions infinitely worse than anything they have yet suffered. The Nazi Party and the Gestapo will outlaw every atom of working-class organisation; tens of thousands will be murdered or sent to concentration camps; hundreds of thousands will be exiled to forced labour in Germany; crushing taxation will be imposed to strengthen the German war machine in its next act of aggression; and the whole fight of the Polish people for better conditions will be thrown back until Nazi rule is finally shaken off."

All that Pollitt wrote about the consequences to the Polish people of defeat at the hands of Hitler has come true (not only of Poland but also of Czechoslovakia, Holland, Belgium, Norway and France). But it is now the contention of the Communist Party, here as well as in the U.S.A., that the British Government are responsible for starting the war because they put pressure on the Polish Government to stand up to Hitler, instead of doing a super-Munich at their expense, and that we are responsible for prolonging the war because we refuse to make peace with Hitler on the basis of accepting his foul tyranny in Poland (and in the rest of Europe).

To Harry Pollitt, the defeat of the Fascist Axis would precipitate revolution in Europe, whereas a Hitler victory would mean fascism everywhere. Palme Dutt never faces the question of what would happen if Hitler were to win. But he has the audacity to contend that the defeat of fascism would mean a British-inspired counter-revolution in Europe and the even greater audacity to misquote Wendell Willkie in support of his phoney thesis.

For Willkie did *not* say that a British victory was necessary to prevent revolution in Europe. He said the exact opposite: he stated that whereas a victory for Hitler would be disastrous, a British victory was also undesirable, because it might release forces in Europe inimical to the social order.

To leave Mr. Willkie out of it, the truth is that American

plutocracy and reaction do not want Hitler defeated, because of the revolutionary consequences. And the Communist Party, here and in the U.S.A., are taking a line that leads them, for all practical purposes, straight into the same camp as the pro-Fascists and reactionaries!

### WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

The Communist Party line of September 1939 was clear. The C.P. Manifesto says:

“Now that the war has come, we have no hesitation in stating the policy of the Communist Party.

“We are in support of all necessary measures to secure the victory of democracy over fascism. . . .

“The essence of the present situation is that the people have now to wage a struggle on two fronts: first, to secure the military victory over fascism; and second, in order to achieve this, the political victory over Chamberlain and the enemies of democracy in this country. These two aims are inseparable, and the harder the efforts to win one, the more sustained must be the activity to win the other.”

In pursuance of this line, the C.P. Manifesto of September 1939 proposed a series of measures for organising our war effort on lines that were efficient and safeguarded the interests of the workers, and strongly emphasised the necessity for replacing the Chamberlain Government by a “People’s Government” purged of all appeaser and reactionary elements—i.e. a sort of Centre-Left coalition, including patriotic Conservatives, a revival of the Popular Front idea adapted to war-time conditions.

Since then the Chamberlain Government has been replaced by a coalition in which the ex-appeasers and arch-reactionaries have been scotched but not killed, and on which Labour is pretty strongly represented, while Hitler has overrun Europe and we are struggling desperately to prevent his occupying this island.

In this situation the Communist Party are now crabbing our war effort in every way they can, by making the worst of everything that is wrong and exploiting every concrete grievance to aid their propaganda for the view that the war is not worth fighting and the people should force their rulers to make peace.

In Mr. Palme Dutt's pamphlet the demand for a People's Government is merely a bit of demagogy to cover an attempt at revolution. For the People's Government is not to come through the use of constitutional machinery and some new combination of existing parties. Mr. Dutt has no use for Parliament, and condemns the Labour Party as unreservedly as he does Liberals and Conservatives. What the Communist demand for a People's Government really means is made clear by the following quotations:

"It [the war] can go on for years and years, if we allow it. The last war went on for four and a quarter years; and it was only ended by the revolt of the people, first in Russia, and then in Germany. . . .

"The way forward was shown in the last war, when the Russian workers and peasants, under the leadership of the Communist Party, after three years of war, drove out their capitalists and landlords, set up their own Government, drew their country out of the war, made peace and proceeded to build socialism. . . .

"To win a People's Peace the peoples must get rid of their imperialist Governments and gain power in their own hands. . . .

"The people must demand real democracy—the rule of the people, with power in the hands of the representatives of the working people; of the workers in the factories, mines, docks, shops and offices; of the professional and intellectual workers; of the small traders, small business men and working farmers; of the housewives.

"The 'National' Government must give place to a People's

Government of chosen representatives of the working people, with no representatives of imperialism or friends of fascism; a Government based for its support on the mass organisations of the working people. . . .

“Many people agree with the aim of a People’s Government and a People’s Peace; but they do not see how the people can make their will felt or how to remove the ‘National’ Government. They ask: Even if the majority of the people should want a People’s Government, how can they hope to reach it, when no elections are held in war-time and this out-of-date Parliament is packed with ‘yes-men’ supporters of this Coalition Government?

“There is only one answer to this question. Only the united and determined mass movement of the people can make their will felt and achieve their aims. Not routine forms, but the strength of the mass movement will determine this question. Every gain that has been won and extorted by the people from the hostile ruling class has been won by the mass struggle of the people.”

What is in Mr. Palme Dutt’s mind is clearly that England in 1940–1941 is faithfully to imitate Russia in 1917–1918. Any differences in the two wars, the two situations, or the two countries have escaped his attention: we are to have a revolutionary anti-war movement led by the Communist Party, which is to end in a British Soviet Government run by the Communist Party, and offering to all nations a peace based on the old Russian formula of no annexations, no indemnities and self-determination for all peoples (this is the policy Mr. Dutt wants his People’s Government to offer a world where the one agreed point is that we must not go back to the international anarchy that gave Fascist aggressors their opportunity).

Lenin was magnificently realistic in the way he adapted his strategy and tactics to the actual facts of the situation in Russia.

Mr. Palme Dutt is academic, not to say scholastic, in his slavish imitation of what happened in Tsarist Russia nearly a quarter of a century ago. Copy-cats and historical research scholars are hardly the stuff of which revolutionary leaders are made.

Lenin was unflinchingly courageous in accepting all the consequences of his doctrine that the war must be ended by revolutions: he said that revolution meant "heavy civil war" and that Socialists who worked for ending the war by revolution must admit that their policy meant the defeat of their own country in the war. He uncompromisingly proclaimed himself a revolutionary defeatist.

But at this point Palme Dutt and the Communist Party of Great Britain become simply dishonest and go in for mere swindling demagoguery. While trying to stir up an anti-war revolutionary movement, they have the audacity to deny that the success of such a movement would inevitably mean our defeat at the hands of Hitler. They must deny it, for, as Mr. Palme Dutt says: "The British people want peace; but they do not want a peace that means the domination of Hitler in Britain."

The Communist Party are advocating a policy which in fact would lead precisely to that result—but they feel compelled to deny the plain consequences of their policy. Lenin said bluntly that his policy of ending the war by revolution ("turn the imperialist war into a civil war") did mean the defeat of Russia, but that this was a lesser evil than to continue the imperialist war, particularly as Tsarist Russia was in any case the most reactionary of all the belligerents.

Instead of emulating Lenin's courageous candour, Mr. Palme Dutt takes refuge in the following speculations and generalities: "So long as Churchill rules in Britain; so long as a British ruling class maintains and fights for the domination of subject nations; so long as they threaten Europe with a new Versailles and with the imposition of puppet counter-

revolutionary Governments, for so long the revolutionary struggle in Europe is held back. . . .

“But as soon as the British people throw off their own imperialists and hold out an offer of a People’s Peace, the situation is reversed. The influence of the People’s Government in Britain and of the Socialist Soviet Union would become the decisive rallying influences of the people’s struggle in Europe. The position and power of reaction in Europe would be undermined.

“Even in the most unfavourable situation, even in the event of the delay for a short while of the maturing of that revolution in Europe, the German and Italian imperialists would be faced with a situation of such internal difficulty as would compel them to manœuvre with the utmost care and caution in approaching the question of peace negotiations.

“Pending the reaching of peace, the People’s Government in Britain would take all the necessary measures for the defence of the power of the people against all enemies at home and abroad.”

To see what optimistic nonsense this speculative argument is, let us look at the example of Russia : Lenin advocated the ending of the war by revolution, but foresaw that this meant defeat, civil war and foreign intervention. But he believed that the Russian example would soon kindle revolutions throughout Europe that would come to the rescue of the infant Soviet Republic.

This turned out to be an optimistic miscalculation. There was no world revolution. Russia had two and a half years of civil war and foreign intervention, and after that was thrown on her own resources.

How did the revolution survive? First and foremost, as Stalin pointed out in an analysis of the revolution, because the Western democracies and Germany continued to be at war, and so neither side could intervene on a big scale in Russia. Second, because Germany and Austria-Hungary,



which defeated Tsarist Russia and thereby made the revolution possible, were themselves defeated by the Allies and then had a half-revolution of their own. These events made intervention by the Central Powers impossible and aroused a state of mind in the Allied working class that first impeded and ultimately ended intervention. In the third place distances were so vast in Russia and communications so poor that it was militarily impossible to obtain a swift decision over the Bolsheviks—they could retire for thousands of miles if necessary and there were vast wild territories ideal for guerrilla warfare.

Now apply these lessons of experience to the present situation: The United Kingdom is a small, densely populated, highly industrialised island, with excellent communications; we are fighting the Fascist Axis more or less single-handed; mechanised transport, tanks and aeroplanes have speeded up warfare to the point where it took Hitler forty-eight hours to occupy Denmark, five days to take Holland, a week to polish off Belgium and a fortnight to smash French resistance.

If our Communists succeeded in making their anti-war revolutionary movement even a serious nuisance, let alone bringing matters to the pitch of civil war, a German invasion by air and sea, at the request of and in co-operation with counter-revolutionary elements here, could overrun this island in a few hours or at most days.

What would stop them? A revolutionary movement in Germany? But over a period, not of days but of months, there was no revolutionary movement in Germany capable of preventing the German Generals from imposing the dictated peace of Brest-Litovsk on Soviet Russia under pressure of occupation of much Russian territory. Only the fact that Germany was later beaten by the Allies let loose a half revolution in that country. To believe that the German people would turn on Hitler in his hour of overwhelming triumph is criminal idiocy.

In case of serious internal disturbances here Fifth-Column elements would help Hitler to over-run the country in a few days, and the conquest would be explained to the German people as assistance to "sound elements" in the British nation to free themselves from "the yoke of plutocracy and international Jewish finance", etc. There would be no German revolution, any more than there was when France was conquered.

Mr. Palme Dutt does not venture to claim that the Soviet Union would go to war against the victorious Fascist bloc in order to rescue us from the results of the revolution and civil war under Hitler's guns and planes into which the Communists would fain plunge us. But, as has already been pointed out in these pages, some of the more naïf Communists do advance this hope as an argument for their policy. It is sufficient to point out that ever since the Soviet-German Pact the U.S.S.R. have shown, both in word and in deed, that they care only for the national interests of the Soviet Union. Since the collapse of France they have been so afraid of Germany that they believe their chief national interest is to appease that country (including, it may be taken for granted, a readiness to confine the activities of the Communist Parties in the countries under Nazi control within limits that will not make their relations with Hitler too difficult). If Hitler were to smash British resistance as well, thanks to its disruption from inside, the Soviet Government would be more frightened than ever. They would most certainly not risk war alone against the whole victorious Fascist Axis for the sake of the British workers, any more than they did for the sake of the French workers.

Any way one looks at it, therefore, the present policy of the Communists of agitating, nominally for a People's Government to make peace, actually for an anti-war revolution, puts the Communists, whether they know it or not, in the position of working for Hitler's victory.

There is no possibility of reconciling the Communist Party's attitude to the war as officially expounded by its secretary Mr. Pollitt with the likewise official statement of its secretary Mr. Palme Dutt, on the ground that changing circumstances necessitated a change in policy. All the main facts—including the Soviet-German non-aggression and friendship pact—were known when Mr. Pollitt's pamphlet appeared. Every one of his predictions as to the results of Fascist victory over democracies has since been tragically justified. What he said would happen to the Polish people under Nazi rule has proved 100 per cent. true. The grave danger of a Fascist victory against which he warned the country has been justified by events as completely as has what he foretold would be the consequences of such a victory. Everyone knows today that we are fighting for the survival of this country as an independent nation and of its democratic institutions. The formation of the Churchill-Labour Government is at any rate an improvement on the old Chamberlain Government and a step in the direction of a trustworthy democratic government.

In the face of these facts, the Communist Party today adopt an attitude which means that they were either dead wrong for years up to the second half of September 1939, or have been dead wrong ever since that date. If it is true, for instance, as Harry Pollitt says, that Poland had no choice because war was forced upon her by Nazi aggression, it cannot be true, as the Communists claim today, that Polish war-mongers led their country into war at British instigation (instead of yielding to Hitler's demands and threats, which is apparently what the Communist Party wants now, but did not want then). If it is true, as Harry Pollitt argues, that even our imperfect capitalist democracy is worth defending and would be destroyed by Hitler if he won, it cannot be true that Mr. Dutt is right when he argues that the difference between fascism and democracy is

unimportant and it does not matter whether we win or lose this war.

Some Communists admit they were wrong before September 15th, 1939, but claim to be right now. Most people, while agreeing that they could not possibly be right both times, consider the Communist Party have been wrong and getting worse ever since they adopted their present line.

The correct policy remains in essentials that originally advocated by the Communist Party—the war on two fronts, i.e. supporting the country's war effort by every means in our power, while fighting reaction and plutocracy and pressing for the adoption of Labour's home, Imperial and foreign policy as necessary to enlist in our cause the revolutionary and democratic forces on the Continent and in the Colonies, without which we cannot secure victory.

NOTE VI

*"LITTLE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THEM"*

IT WAS FORESEEN from the beginning (see pp. 16 and 40) that as C.P. policy became more firmly established not only would the leadership be driven increasingly to overstress the evil of British capitalism and to understress the evil of German Nazism, but that rank-and-file members of the C.P., and those influenced by it, would come in ever greater numbers to believe, at the least, that "there's very little to choose between the two". Here is a small selection of extracts from letters received during December and January:

"To win the war under the present ruling class would be as much a defeat for the workers as a Hitler victory."

"You like to think of German imperialism as a far greater evil than British imperialism; I am a realist and ask which is the imperialism which economically oppresses subject races the most *now*."

"It is obvious that it is a quarrel between two rival imperialisms, equally enemies of the people."

"Halifax is ethically no different from Goebbels."

"The result of a victory of British imperialism would be the victory of reaction throughout Europe." (Nothing was said in the letter about the result of a victory of Hitler.)

"You choose to retreat as the heavy Fascist foot is moving over the threshold—not the German, not the Italian, but our own British Fascist foot."

"Whose victory and over whom? Defence of the Fatherland against the *lesser* of the two bandits!"

"I don't yield to anyone in my detestation of Hitler and Mussolini, but I think Halifax, Churchill and Co. are nearer menaces to the British people."

"We stand to lose as much under the present Government as we would do under German fascism."

"You are considerably overestimating the difference between capitalism in its fascist stage in Germany and Italy, and in its monopoly stage in the British Empire and the U.S.A."

"Laski's gyrations and Strachey's but especially Gollancz's emotionalism about German Nazism swamp their political foresight, blinding them to the more dangerous (to the world's workers) Anglo-U.S.A. imperialists."

CHAPTER VII

TOTALITARIANISM

By JOHN STRACHEY

*January, 1941*

I HAVE PREVIOUSLY suggested that the root difference between those who can, and those who cannot, accept the present revolutionary defeatist policy of the Communist Party is on the question of the characterisation of fascism.

The Communist International is grossly under-estimating both the strength and the vileness of fascism. It under-estimates (in theory, though not perhaps so much in practice) the capacity of a Fascist Government to combat and hold in check for important periods the inherent contradictions of a capitalist economy. But here I wish to deal with the other side of the under-estimate; with the Communists' under-estimate of the vileness of fascism.

What is it that every decent, normal man finds so unspeakably vile in fascism? Undoubtedly it is what we call totalitarianism. Most of us know perfectly well what totalitarianism is in the sense that we could unhesitatingly point to instances of it. But if we had to define totalitarianism we might be at a loss. The best short definition of it will perhaps be "enforced uniformity". A country is totalitarian if uniformity of all kinds is enforced upon the people of that country by the State. We primarily think of such enforced uniformity as mental uniformity; for it is in the mental sphere that such enforced uniformity is most striking and most repulsive. But such enforced mental uniformity necessarily involves uniformity in everyday,

material life, in living conditions, even in clothes (such as uniforms), etc., etc.

Most people instinctively and passionately dislike such enforced uniformity, and do not suppose that it requires any argument to show that it is a supreme evil. But this is a dangerous attitude. It is important to think our way clearly through this question, for the truth is that although totalitarianism is certainly an extreme evil, yet it is so for reasons rather different from what might at first sight appear. Moreover, although it is a supreme evil, totalitarianism has, in the short run, advantages which undoubtedly attract many people to it. It is this which makes it so dangerous. Some people, in particular, do not think that totalitarianism, or enforced uniformity, matters to the working class. It is suggested that, if such enforced uniformity provides the working class with rather better living conditions and more economic security, then the loss of the right to differ does not matter to workers in the least.

### SCIENTIFIC UNIFORMITY

Let us first of all notice that uniformity, even mental uniformity, is not necessarily and in itself an evil. Mental uniformity is not necessarily evil even when that uniformity is taught by authority. Mental uniformity is not only harmless but highly beneficial in any case where the truth of a matter is fully known. The best example of this is afforded, of course, by the older sciences. In the case of elementary physics and chemistry, for example, the basic laws are well established, and it is an immense benefit to the whole of humanity that everyone thinks alike on the question of these laws, and that they can be authoritatively taught to every new student. Once, in a word, the human mind has fully grasped any particular sphere of knowledge, there need be no two opinions about it. For instance, it is not only harmless, but vitally important, that we should all agree



that two and two make four. Unless there is mental uniformity on this point we cannot get on with mathematics. It is true that there will be no need to *enforce* the theory that two and two make four, by establishing pains and penalties for those who heretically assert that two and two make five. But it will be necessary to teach children that two and two make four, and the difference between the authoritative teaching of the young and the enforcement of a theory on adults is one of degree.

However, these scientific examples of beneficial mental uniformity should at once make us pause; for in our own time the basic laws of physics have been altered by the discoveries of Einstein, Bohr, Planck and the other contemporary physicists. We see that, even in the case of one of the best-established sciences, further progress would have been barred if mental uniformity on these basic laws had been enforced with legal sanctions. As it was, the scientific world came to accept the new theories, and they began to be taught instead of the old ones, because they were demonstrably preferable. But, notice this, the net result has not been to destroy the uniformity of scientific thought on elementary physics, it has been merely to replace an old uniformity with a new one. This is because, in the case of the exact sciences, rival theories can be tried out in practice against each other, and the superior one selected.

The example of the revolution in physics which has taken place in our times will make us see how far more dangerous an enforced uniformity would be in the case of the younger, less exact sciences. In the case of psychology, for example, it is far less possible (though in my opinion it is to some extent possible) to apply the test of practice to the various psychological theories current. Hence follow two things. On the one hand it would be still more obviously disastrous to the possibility of further development to enforce uniformity on any current psychological theory. Second, we cannot

expect some new psychological theory to replace the old one in the way that new physical theory replaces old physical theory. We must expect that two or more contradictory psychological theories will exist together in the world for some time. This will be, no doubt, in itself harmful to psychological progress; but it will be far less harmful than an artificial enforcement of one or other of the rival theories when we do not really know which is the truer one.

### FASCIST UNIFORMITY

I am giving these scientific examples to show by contrast how and why we are perfectly right in regarding it as a monstrosity to enforce a particular social, economic and, above all, political doctrine. For, of course, we know far less of the truth in these spheres than in the case of the sciences. Therefore what is enforced is almost certain to be largely untrue, and the enforcement of mental uniformity on the basis of an untrue doctrine will have catastrophic consequences for the human mind. We can probably claim little more in these fields of knowledge than the negative certainty—though this we know for sure—that the political doctrine that is being enforced in the leading totalitarian State is utterly untrue. Fascist, and more especially Nazi, doctrine is so wildly untrue (i.e., it so wildly contradicts the objective facts of the real world) that it corrupts, and will ultimately destroy, all those on whom it is enforced.

There will be a wide measure of agreement that Fascist doctrine has this character, but this agreement may conceal a very sharp disagreement. One may object to Fascist totalitarianism for two different reasons. One may object to it because the mental uniformity which is enforced is an untruth; or one may object to it because mental uniformity is enforced. Communists, on the whole, object to fascism only because they believe that the mental uniformity enforced by the Fascists is on the basis of an untrue doctrine.

Those of us who take a more serious view of fascism object to it, not only for this reason, but also because under fascism mental uniformity is enforced. We do so because we do not believe that anybody has yet discovered enough about political, social and economic theory to justify the authoritative enforcement of any particular doctrine.

### SOVIET UNIFORMITY

We may illustrate this last point by turning to a consideration of the Soviet Union. Now, it cannot be denied that the Soviet Union is a totalitarian society on the basis of the above definition. There is in the Soviet Union, that is to say, an enforced mental uniformity. But the doctrine on the basis of which this mental uniformity is enforced is incomparably truer (i.e., gives an incomparably better and closer interpretation of reality) than is Fascist doctrine. For the doctrine on the basis of which mental uniformity is enforced in the Soviet Union is Socialist or Marxist doctrine. The fact that the Soviet Union is totalitarian does not mean that it is not Socialist, with all the immense advantages of a Socialist society. The Soviet Union is Socialist in the precise sense that it has totally expropriated its capitalists and is conducting its productive system for use upon a planned basis.

Now, there would be no objection to mental uniformity in the Soviet Union if the doctrine enforced were completely true. In that case, however, just as there would be no objection, so also there would be no need, or at any rate less and less need, of enforcement. A completely true political and economic doctrine (i.e., a doctrine which completely and adequately accounted for all the phenomena of social life) would without doubt so completely captivate and dominate the human mind that there would be less and less need to inflict pains and penalties on anyone who disagreed with it.

It is, of course, the claim of most Communists that

Socialist and Marxist doctrine, as it is enforced in the Soviet Union, is of this character. Communists have no hesitation or scruple in enforcing mental uniformity on those peoples over whom they have power, because they honestly believe that they are enforcing the truth, and nothing but the truth, upon them. Now, the test of whether or not they are mistaken in this view is provided by observing whether or not they are able progressively to dispense with the apparatus of coercion used for enforcing their doctrine. If contemporary Communist doctrine is completely true, in the sense that it gives, not only the best available, but a fully adequate, interpretation of reality, then it will be less and less necessary to prevent anybody from differing from it; for no sane man will wish to differ from it. If, on the other hand, Communist doctrine (Marxism—Leninism—Stalinism), even though it is the best interpretation of social phenomena which the human mind has yet achieved, is not a fully adequate interpretation, in the sense that it cannot account for important observed phenomena, then the attempt to prevent people from differing from it will become more and more difficult; a larger and larger apparatus of mental coercion will become necessary; or worse, the apparatus of mental coercion will kill the capacity of genuine thinking, and mental uniformity will be achieved, but at the price of killing mental life.

### THE CLASS BASIS

We can now approach the question of totalitarianism from another angle. The most obvious feature of totalitarianism is enforced agreement with what the Government says. But what will the Government say? The Government will say what it believes will keep it in power. This is the immemorial purpose of Governments. The achievement and maintenance of power are their supreme objective. But what is a Government? Marx teaches us that a Government

is always representative of a particular social class, or of a coalition of such classes, or, occasionally, of a balance of forces between two or more classes. Therefore, what the Government says will be designed, in the last analysis, not so much to keep itself in power for its own sake, as to keep in power the class, or classes, which it represents. This is easy enough to see in the case of fascism. Fascism totally imposes on the peoples within its power an ideology convenient to the classes which the Fascist Government represents. Marxists do not believe that fascism can permanently succeed in imposing such an ideology on the whole population, because fascism cannot eliminate the classes (i.e., workers and peasants) of which that ideology is not representative. Fascism will be unable, in the long run, to impose the ideas of the classes (i.e., capitalists, landlords, etc.) which it represents on the suppressed classes. For the real interests of the workers and peasants will always be driving them towards a refusal to accept the Fascist propaganda. Therefore, the Fascist attempt to enforce mental uniformity on the basis of the ideology of the ruling classes can never be a success.

I agree with this analysis, although I fear that the inevitability of the people's reaction against the ramming down their throats of the alien ideology of fascism is greatly exaggerated. What is true is that the Fascist attempt to impose the lies of the governing classes on the minds of the whole people must *either* provoke a great popular reaction, in which fascism is destroyed, *or* must corrupt the whole of civilisation through and through, and ultimately destroy it. This second alternative is just as possible as the first, and Marx was careful to note that it was. (See the passage in the Communist Manifesto where he says that every class conflict must result in the victory of the suppressed class *or* the common ruin of both classes.)

But Communists believe that the mental uniformity

being imposed upon the Russian people by the Soviet Government is of a fundamentally different character. The ideology which is being imposed is the ideology convenient and appropriate to the Russian workers and peasants. It is argued that this ideology does not have to be enforced on the Russian masses, to whom it comes naturally, but on the remainder of the former privileged classes alone. It is further argued that these privileged classes can be, and are being, totally eliminated, and absorbed within the Russian masses, thus making a classless society. As and when this process is completed, the ideology being imposed will become the natural ideology, not of any class, but of the whole of society. Therefore, there will be no inevitable and ever-growing resistance to this ideology from suppressed classes; for these suppressed classes will have ceased to exist. And at that stage, the need to continue to impose the ideology, or any other mental uniformity, will, presumably, cease to exist.

This is the reason why Communists believe that the Soviet Government's suppression of all differences of political opinion need not, and will not, have the ordinary consequences of suppression; that it will not drive the opposition underground, create plots, necessitate the permanent maintenance of a vast secret-police system, and generally destroy the freedom of the community. For, Communists believe, for the first time in human history there will be no class basis for any movement of opposition to the Government. Therefore the Soviet Government's suppression of all opposition views is, for the first time in human history, fully justified; since, for the first time in history, it can be completely and finally successful, and therefore cease.

### THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE

The question is, Is all this true? It is obviously vital to understand it. It is hardly too much to say that all talk about

liberty is mere vapourings unless the Marxist analysis of the question in terms of class power has been understood. Nevertheless, contemporary evidence is piling up that this analysis, as applied by the Communist International to-day, is so serious an over-simplification of the real facts as to amount to a very dangerous error in practice. For what is the Soviet experience in this matter? The fact has to be faced that it has been precisely in the last five years, which began eighteen years after the establishment of Soviet power, that the enforcement of mental uniformity in the Soviet Union has become total, that the apparatus of coercion for enforcing this mental uniformity has been greatly increased, that the resistance to the enforcement of this mental uniformity has become really vicious, involving plots, attempted risings, purges, sabotage and executions. All this is not in itself conclusive evidence of the falsity of the view that such opposition to Marxist ideology would disappear when the class basis for it had disappeared. There was left in Russia throughout the 1930's a certain amount of class basis for opposition to the Soviet Government's attempt to enforce the acceptance of Marxist ideology. The richer peasants had only very recently been dispossessed. The older generation of ex-bourgeois could remember the days of their privileges. And above all, of course, the fact that the rest of the world remained capitalist gave all those dissatisfied remnants hope and vitality.

When all this has been said, however, can it possibly account for the ferocity of the struggle which broke out in Russia between 1935 and 1940? Are we not forced by the occurrence of this struggle to say that it affords evidence which, if not conclusive, yet cannot be neglected, that, in the present stage of human development, the attempt to enforce the current Communist ideology produces all the familiar counter-movements, and that these reactions in turn inevitably produce a violent rigidity in the enforcing

authorities, with all the evil results with which the world has age-long familiarity?

It is not, let it be emphasised, a question of the merits of the struggle between Stalin and the Soviet Government on the one hand, and Trotsky, Bucharin, Radek and the opposition generally. In my view, as far as I have been able to study the matter, Stalin and the Soviet Government were throughout in the right. Trotsky's leadership would have been a catastrophe, and Bucharin would have led the Soviet Union to a deal with the Nazis, concluded much earlier, and on a basis much more advantageous to the Nazis. What is in question is the fact that this struggle took place, and that it was conducted on both sides with limitless ferocity and violence. Guilt which they can never expiate rests on the heads of the opposition leaders and their followers for having at the beginning pushed their opposition to the point of plot, espionage and sabotage. For it was almost certainly because the Trotskyists, Bucharinists and the rest did this, that the new period of extreme Soviet totalitarianism arose. There is strong evidence that, about 1935, Stalin and the Soviet Government were genuinely looking forward to a liberalisation of the whole Soviet community. Stalin made his "Life is getting happier" speech. In his interview with Roy Howard, he said that he looked forward to lively contested elections under the new constitution. There was an anti-totalitarian current. Then the murder of Kiroff touched off the whole sequence of plot, suppression, purge, trial and executions. In such a period the imposition of totalitarianism, i.e., of the extremely rigid enforcement of mental uniformity, took place.

Did it matter that the Soviet Union fell into this totalitarian period? It is utterly impossible to say that it did not matter. The cost, in terms of economic loss and in diminution of military efficiency, was gigantic. The cost in capacity for progress in civilisation may yet prove to have been more gigantic



still. So much is in a way admitted, privately if not publicly, by all sides (i.e., Stalin's warning to the opposition at the end of the 1920's that if they carried their opposition line to its logical conclusion they would do great harm to the Party). But was this struggle, with its totalitarian outcome, avoidable? There is a very strong tendency amongst Communists to suggest that this struggle had to be fought out in any case; that this development had to be gone through as an unavoidable stage in the creation of a classless society. This view is disastrously mistaken. No doubt some such period of political struggles in the 1930's was inevitable; but Communist fatalism overlooks the whole, and all-important, question of *how* those struggles were to be conducted. For, of course, the insane ferocity with which those struggles were in fact fought out was avoidable. And if this insane ferocity had been avoided the Soviet Union would be in a ten times stronger position than she is to-day. If, in a word, the Russians, above all the Russians within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, had known how to conduct their, in themselves, inevitable political struggles within the limits of sanity and reason, instead of plotting, counter-plotting, murdering, and executing each other, the world would be an incomparably better place than it is to-day. But every Communist on principle shuts his mind to this obvious fact. He refuses to see or admit it. Nevertheless, the fact is that Soviet totalitarianism has not hitherto, at any rate, turned out to be of a totally different character from other totalitarianisms. It has not, as was hoped, turned out to be the case that the doctrine on the basis of which mental uniformity is enforced is so true that it will not provoke violent counter-movements. Nor has it turned out to be the case that this doctrine has proved to be so true that its enforcement will avoid tending to stifle mental life. This does not mean, I repeat, that the Soviet Union is not Socialist; but it does mean that she is paying a staggering price both in

economic and military efficiency, and in capacity for cultural life, for the methods by means of which the Russians insist on fighting out their political conflicts.

### TOTALITARIANISM AND THE WORKERS

If we are forced to recognise that even the Soviet Union, which is enforcing a doctrine incomparably truer than the Fascist doctrine, is paying a frightful price for totalitarianism, we can imagine the immeasurable price which the peoples of the Fascist countries are paying. We can imagine, above all, the immeasurable price which humanity as a whole would pay if Fascist totalitarianism were enforced, as a result of a Nazi victory, on the whole world. For it is literally mad to say that the exploitation of the workers under fascism is "only a little worse than under a democratic capitalism". Fascist exploitation is total exploitation; under a Fascist Government, with its effective methods for the total enforcement of any doctrine, exploitation and injustice can, and do, go to any lengths. The erection of war as the supreme end and object of human life is in fact only an instance of this. It is only an instance of the fact that under a Fascist régime the welfare objective can be totally discarded and the power objective totally adopted. In other words, the interests of the workers, which in a democratic, non-totalitarian capitalism must always be considered to the extent to which working-class agitation can force their consideration, can be wholly disregarded in a Fascist State. This is the simple and obvious reason why totalitarianism matters passionately to the working class. The creation of a totalitarian régime sweeps away at one blow every safeguard against limitless exploitation which centuries of working-class effort have built up in the West. It is perfectly true, of course, that the difference between totalitarian exploitation and the exploitation suffered by the workers in the democratic capitalisms is "only a matter of degree".

But then the difference between shaving and cutting your throat is "only a matter of degree"; it is only a matter of the degree of pressure which you put on your throat with the razor.

Our conclusion must be that to ignore the question of totalitarianism, as the Communist International is ignoring it to-day, is an error which vitiates all thinking in the contemporary world. The Communist International, by its present policy of revolutionary defeatism within the capitalist democracies, ignores the existence of Fascist totalitarianism. Communist spokesmen admit, of course, that Fascist totalitarianism exists, and that it is deplorable; but they say that the difference between it and the conditions of capitalist democracy is now not important in practice. Similarly, Communist spokesmen ignore, or rather actively deny, the unquestionable existence of Soviet totalitarianism. They do not, as they well might, claim that such totalitarianism is a deplorable but inevitable necessity of the class struggle in the Soviet Union. They simply pretend that it is not there.

### TOTALITARIANISM CANNOT BE IGNORED

This double failure on the part of the Communist International to recognise totalitarianism, which is one of the most glaringly obvious facts of the contemporary world, makes the International's whole position unreal. For nobody else ignores this issue. The Communist International would, in a sense, be justified if the working classes of the Western capitalist democracies showed themselves to be indifferent to the issue of totalitarianism; if the British workers, for example, showed that they did not care whether they were exploited in the limited way possible under democratic capitalism, as at present, or totally under a Fascist régime, then the Communist International would, at any rate, be genuinely representing working-class opinion

if it ignored this difference too. But everything which the British workers say and do shows that, since they are ordinary, sane, sensible people, they attach the utmost importance to this difference. They daily evince their horror and disgust at totalitarianism. They show that they are fully aware of the immense value of the safeguards against unlimited exploitation provided by the liberties which they have won. In the same way workers who passionately sympathise with the Soviet Union, and recognise that it is a Socialist community, are yet unwilling to pretend that it is not totalitarian, or to ignore the grave disadvantages, precisely for the workers, of even the Soviet form of totalitarianism.

Naturally, totalitarianism is not the only, or even the deepest issue in the contemporary world. I notice, for example, that Dr. John Lewis, in reviewing Lucien Laurat's *Marxism and Democracy* in the *Daily Worker*, alleged that for me the difference between socialism and capitalism had been totally obscured; that the only difference which I now saw was between Democracy and Dictatorship. But no, not being deprived of common understanding, I can see *both* the difference between socialism and capitalism *and* the difference between Democracy and Dictatorship; and I think that both differences are important.

It is exactly typical of what the Communist mind has become that Dr. Lewis should suppose that one must ignore the difference between capitalism and socialism because one can appreciate the difference between dictatorship and democracy. He naturally thinks this because he has found it necessary, in order to emphasise the difference between capitalism and socialism, to pretend that there is no difference between democracy and dictatorship. More balanced people are not under this sort of compulsion to render themselves blind to one set of phenomena in order to see another set.

It is the same in the case of totalitarianism—which is, of course, an aspect of dictatorship. Because we insist upon the importance of the difference between totalitarianism on the one hand, and relative liberty and toleration on the other, we have not lost sight of the difference between capitalism and socialism. What we know is that at the present stage of human development the enforcement of totalitarianism upon the world would be a catastrophe from which human civilisation might well not recover. This may not always be so. It may be that we shall arrive at such certainty of knowledge in political and economic science that mental uniformity in these fields will become not only harmless but immensely beneficial. But then, by that time, there will be no need to enforce such mental uniformity.

## CHAPTER VIII

# FASCISM AND DEMOCRACY

By GEORGE ORWELL

ONE OF THE EASIEST pastimes in the world is debunking Democracy. In this country one is hardly obliged to bother any longer with the merely reactionary arguments against popular rule, but during the last twenty years "bourgeois" Democracy has been much more subtly attacked by both Fascists and Communists, and it is highly significant that these seeming enemies have both attacked it on the same grounds. It is true that the Fascists, with their bolder methods of propoganda, also use when it suits them the aristocratic argument that Democracy "brings the worst men to the top", but the basic contention of all apologists of totalitarianism is that Democracy is a fraud. It is supposed to be no more than a cover-up for the rule of small handfuls of rich men. This is not altogether false, and still less is it obviously false; on the contrary, there is more to be said for it than against it. A sixteen-year-old schoolboy can attack Democracy much better than he can defend it. And one cannot answer him unless one knows the anti-democratic "case" and is willing to admit the large measure of truth it contains.

To begin with, it is always urged against "bourgeois" Democracy that it is negatived by economic inequality. What is the use of political liberty, so called, to a man who works 12 hours a day for £3 a week? Once in five years he may get the chance to vote for his favourite party, but for the rest of the time practically every detail of his life is dictated by his employer. And in practice his political life is dictated as well. The monied class can keep all the

important ministerial and official jobs in its own hands, and it can work the electoral system in its own favour by bribing the electorate, directly or indirectly. Even when by some mischance a government representing the poorer classes gets into power, the rich can usually blackmail it by threatening to export capital. Most important of all, nearly the whole cultural and intellectual life of the community—newspapers, books, education, films, radio—is controlled by monied men who have the strongest motive to prevent the spread of certain ideas. The citizen of a democratic country is “conditioned” from birth onwards, less rigidly but not much less effectively than he would be in a totalitarian state.

And there is no certainty that the rule of a privileged class can ever be broken by purely democratic means. In theory a Labour government could come into office with a clear majority and proceed at once to establish Socialism by Act of Parliament. In practice the monied classes would rebel, and probably with success, because they would have most of the permanent officials and the key men in the armed forces on their side. Democratic methods are only possible where there is a fairly large basis of agreement between all political parties. There is no strong reason for thinking that any really fundamental change can ever be achieved peacefully.

Again, it is often argued that the whole façade of democracy—freedom of speech and assembly, independent trade unions and so forth—must collapse as soon as the monied classes are no longer in a position to make concessions to their employees. Political “liberty”, it is said, is simply a bribe, a bloodless substitute for the Gestapo. It is a fact that the countries we call democratic are usually prosperous countries—in most cases they are exploiting cheap coloured labour, directly or indirectly—and also that Democracy as we know it has never existed except in maritime or mountainous countries, i.e. countries which can defend themselves

without the need for an enormous standing army. Democracy accompanies, probably demands, favourable conditions of life; it has never flourished in poor and militarised states. Take away England's sheltered position, so it is said, and England will promptly revert to political methods as barbarous as those of Rumania. Moreover all government, democratic or totalitarian, rests ultimately on force. No government, unless it intends to connive at its own overthrow, can or does show the smallest respect for democratic "rights" when once it is seriously menaced. A democratic country fighting a desperate war is forced, just as much as an autocracy or a Fascist state, to conscript soldiers, coerce labour, imprison defeatists, suppress seditious newspapers; in other words, it can only save itself from destruction by ceasing to be democratic. The things it is supposed to be fighting for are always scrapped as soon as the fighting starts.

That, roughly summarised, is the case against "bourgeois" Democracy, advanced by Fascists and Communists alike, though with differences of emphasis. At every point one has got to admit that it contains much truth. And yet why is it that it is ultimately false—for everyone bred in a democratic country knows quasi-instinctively that there is something wrong with the whole of this line of argument?

What is wrong with this familiar debunking of Democracy is that it cannot explain the whole of the facts. The actual differences in social atmosphere and political behaviour between country and country are far greater than can be explained by any theory which writes off laws, customs, traditions etc. as mere "superstructure". On paper it is very simple to demonstrate that Democracy is "just the same as" (or "just as bad as") totalitarianism. There are concentration camps in Germany; but then there are concentration camps in India. Jews are persecuted wherever Fascism reigns; but what about the colour laws in South Africa? Intellectual honesty is a crime in any totalitarian country;



but even in England it is not exactly profitable to speak and write the truth. These parallels can be extended indefinitely. But the implied argument all along the line is that a difference of degree is not a difference. It is quite true, for instance, that there is political persecution in democratic countries. The question is how much. How many refugees have fled from Britain, or from the whole of the British Empire, during the past seven years? And how many from Germany? How many people personally known to you have been beaten with rubber truncheons or forced to swallow pints of castor oil? How dangerous do you feel it to be to go into the nearest pub and express your opinion that this is a capitalist war and we ought to stop fighting? Can you point to anything in recent British or American history that compares with the June Purge, the Russian Trotskyist trials, the pogrom that followed Von Rath's assassination? Could an article equivalent to the one I am writing be printed in any totalitarian country, red, brown or black? The *Daily Worker* has just been suppressed, but only after ten years of life, whereas in Rome, Moscow or Berlin it could not have survived ten days. And during the last six months of its life Great Britain was not only at war but in a more desperate predicament than at any time since Trafalgar. Moreover—and this is the essential point—even after the *Daily Worker's* suppression its editors are permitted to make a public fuss, issue statements in their own defence, get questions asked in Parliament and enlist the support of well-meaning people of various political shades. The swift and final "liquidation" which would be a matter of course in a dozen other countries not only does not happen, but the possibility that it *may* happen barely enters anyone's mind.

It is not particularly significant that British Fascists and Communists should hold pro-Hitler opinions;<sup>1</sup> what is significant is that they dare to express them. In doing so

<sup>1</sup> See footnote on page 238.—*Editor.*

they are silently admitting that democratic liberties are *not* altogether a sham. During the years 1929-34 all orthodox Communists were committed to the belief that "Social-fascism" (i.e. Socialism) was the real enemy of the workers and that capitalist Democracy was in no way whatever preferable to Fascism. Yet when Hitler came to power scores of thousands of German Communists—still uttering the same doctrine, which was not abandoned till some time later—fled to France, Switzerland, England, the U.S.A. or any other democratic country that would admit them. By their action they had belied their words; they had "voted with their feet", as Lenin put it. And here one comes upon the best asset that capitalist Democracy has to show. It is the comparative feeling of security enjoyed by the citizens of democratic countries, the knowledge that when you talk politics with your friend there is no Gestapo ear glued to the keyhole, the belief that "they" cannot punish you unless you have broken the law, the belief that the law is above the State. It does not matter that this belief is partly an illusion—as it is, of course. For a widespread illusion, capable of influencing public behaviour, is itself an important fact. Let us imagine that the present or some future British government decided to follow up the suppression of the *Daily Worker* by utterly destroying the Communist Party, as was done in Italy and Germany. Very probably they would find the task impossible. For political persecution of that kind can only be carried out by a full-blown Gestapo, which does not exist in England and could not at present be created. The social atmosphere is too much against it, the necessary personnel would not be forthcoming. The pacifists who assure us that if we fight against Fascism we shall "go Fascist" ourselves forget that every political system has to be operated by human beings, and human beings are influenced by their past. England may suffer many degenerative changes as a result of war, but it cannot,

except possibly by conquest, be turned into a replica of Nazi Germany. It may develop towards some kind of austro-fascism, but not towards Fascism of the positive, revolutionary, malignant type. The necessary human material is not there. That much we owe to three centuries of security, and to the fact that we were not beaten in the last war.

But I am not suggesting that the "freedom" referred to in leading articles in the *Daily Worker* is the only thing worth fighting for. Capitalist Democracy is not enough in itself, and what is more it cannot be salvaged unless it changes into something else. Our Conservative statesmen, with their dead minds, probably hope and believe that the result of a British victory will be simply a return to the past: another Versailles Treaty, and then the resumption of "normal" economic life, with millions of unemployed, deer-stalking on the Scottish moors, the Eton and Harrow match on July 11th, etc., etc. The anti-war theorists of the extreme Left fear or profess to fear the same thing. But that is a static conception which fails even at this date to grasp the power of the thing we are fighting against. Nazism may or may not be a disguise for monopoly capitalism, but at any rate it is not capitalistic in the nineteenth-century sense. It is governed by the sword and not by the cheque-book. It is a centralised economy, streamlined for war and able to use to the very utmost such labour and raw materials as it commands. An old-fashioned capitalist state, with all its forces pulling in different directions, with armaments held up for the sake of profits, incompetent idiots holding high positions by right of birth, and constant friction between class and class, obviously cannot compete with that kind of thing. If the Popular Front campaign had succeeded and England had two or three years ago joined up with France and the U.S.S.R. for a preventive war—or threat of war—against Germany, British capitalism might perhaps have been given a new lease of life. But this failed to happen

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and Hitler has had time to arm to the full and has succeeded in driving his enemies apart. For at least another year England must fight alone, and against very heavy odds. Our advantages are, first of all, naval strength, and secondly the fact that our resources are in the long run vastly greater—if we can use them. But we can only use them if we transform our social and economic system from top to bottom. The productivity of labour, the morale of the Home front, the attitude towards us of the coloured peoples and the conquered European populations, all ultimately depend on whether we can disprove Goebbels's charge that England is merely a selfish plutocracy fighting for the status quo. For if we remain that plutocracy—and Goebbels's picture is not *entirely* false—we shall be conquered. If I had to choose between Chamberlain's England and the sort of régime that Hitler means to impose on us, I would choose Chamberlain's England without a moment's hesitation. But that alternative does not really exist. Put crudely, the choice is between Socialism and defeat. We must go forward, or perish.

Last summer, when England's situation was more obviously desperate than it is now, there was a widespread realisation of this fact. If the mood of the summer months has faded away, it is partly because things have turned out less disastrously than most people then expected, but partly also because there existed no political party, newspaper or outstanding individual to give the general discontent a voice and a direction. There was no one capable of explaining—in such a way as would get him a hearing—just why we were in the mess we were and what was the way out of it. The man who rallied the nation was Churchill, a gifted and courageous man, but a patriot of the limited, traditional kind. In effect Churchill said simply, "We are fighting for England", and the people flocked to follow him. Could anyone have so moved them by saying, "We are fighting for Socialism"? They knew that they had been let down, knew

that the existing social system was all wrong and that they wanted something different—but was it Socialism that they wanted? What *was* Socialism, anyway? To this day the word has only a vague meaning for the great mass of English people; certainly it has no emotional appeal. Men will not die for it in anything like the numbers that they will die for King and Country. However much one may admire Churchill—and I personally have always admired him as a man and as a writer, little as I like his politics—and however grateful one may feel for what he did last summer, is it not a frightful commentary on the English Socialist movement that at this date, in the moment of disaster, the people still look to a Conservative to lead them?

What England has never possessed is a Socialist party which meant business *and* took account of contemporary realities. Whatever programmes the Labour Party may issue, it has been difficult for ten years past to believe that its leaders expected or even wished to see any fundamental change in their own lifetime. Consequently, such revolutionary feeling as existed in the left-wing movement has trickled away into various blind alleys, of which the Communist one was the most important. Communism was from the first a lost cause in western Europe, and the Communist parties of the various countries early degenerated into mere publicity agents for the Russian régime. In this situation they were forced not only to change their most fundamental opinions with each shift of Russian policy, but to insult every instinct and every tradition of the people they were trying to lead. After a civil war, two famines and a purge their adopted Fatherland had settled down to oligarchical rule, rigid censorship of ideas and the slavish worship of a Fuehrer. Instead of pointing out that Russia was a backward country which we might learn from but could not be expected to imitate, the Communists were obliged to pretend that the purges, “liquidations” etc. were healthy symptoms

which any right-minded person would like to see transferred to England. Naturally the people who could be attracted by such a creed, and remain faithful to it after they had grasped its nature, tended to be neurotic or malignant types, people fascinated by the spectacle of successful cruelty. In England they could get themselves no stable mass following. But they could be, and they remain, a danger, for the simple reason that there is no other body of people calling themselves revolutionaries. If you are discontented, if you want to overthrow the existing social system by force, and if you wish to join a political party pledged to this end, then you must join the Communists; effectively there is no one else. They will not achieve their own ends, but they may achieve Hitler's. The so-called People's Convention, for instance, cannot conceivably win power in England, but it may spread enough defeatism to help Hitler very greatly at some critical moment. And between the People's Convention on the one hand, and the "my country right or wrong" type of patriotism on the other, there is at present no seizable policy.

When the real English Socialist movement appears—it must appear if we are not to be defeated, and the basis for it is already there in the conversations in a million pubs and air-raid shelters—it will cut across the existing party divisions. It will be both revolutionary and democratic. It will aim at the most fundamental changes and be perfectly willing to use violence if necessary. But also it will recognize that not all cultures are the same, that national sentiments and traditions have to be respected if revolutions are not to fail, that England is not Russia—or China, or India. It will realise that British democracy is *not* altogether a sham, *not* simply "superstructure", that on the contrary it is something extremely valuable which must be preserved and extended, and, above all, must not be insulted. That is why I have spent so much space above in answering the familiar

arguments against "bourgeois" Democracy. Bourgeois Democracy is not enough, but it is very much better than Fascism, and to work against it is to saw off the branch you are sitting on. The common people know this, even if the intellectuals do not. They will cling very firmly to the "illusion" of Democracy and to the Western conception of honesty and common decency. It is no use appealing to them in terms of "realism" and power politics, preaching the doctrines of Macchiavelli in the jargon of Lawrence and Wishart. The most that that can achieve is confusion of the kind that Hitler wishes for. Any movement that can rally the mass of the English people must have as its keynotes the democratic values which the doctrinaire Marxist writes off as "illusion" or "superstructure". Either they will produce a version of Socialism more or less in accord with their past, or they will be conquered from without, with unpredictable but certainly horrible results. Whoever tries to undermine their faith in Democracy, to chip away the moral code they derive from the Protestant centuries and the French Revolution, is not preparing power for himself, though he may be preparing it for Hitler—a process we have seen repeated so often in Europe that to mistake its nature is no longer excusable.



*NOTE VII*

*THE ALTERNATIVE*

**T**HERE FOLLOW (i) an essay by John Strachey, suggesting an alternative, in the circumstances of today, to “revolutionary defeatism”, (ii) a contribution from George Orwell, entitled “Patriots and Revolutionaries”, (iii) a draft programme of some immediate practical demands, put forward by the editor in December 1940.

CHAPTER IX

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

By JOHN STRACHEY

December 1940

**D**URING THE LAST years of the nineteenth century, and the first of the twentieth, the question of how the Labour and working-class movements of the highly developed, industrialised countries of Europe might come to power, became the dominating question for all Socialists.

It was during these years (the last years of his life) that Engels wrote his famous Preface to the *Class Struggles in France*. In it he gave a general indication of his view of the way in which major working-class parties might come to power. The fate of that Preface revealed at once the burning and acute character of the question. It was half suppressed and half falsified by the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party. It was made into an unconditionally "reformist" document, virtually repudiating the very possibility of armed struggle. Its correct text was only unearthed (by the Marx-Engels Institute) in our day.

The correct text of the Preface shows it to have been, like all Engels' writings, a beautifully balanced statement. Indeed, it remains by far the best statement which has ever been made on the subject. The claim to the immense authority of Engels, which the German Social Democrats used on behalf of their policy for the next thirty years, is shown by the full text to have been quite unjustified. But, on the other hand, the claim made by the spokesmen of the Communist International, that Engels had, in the main at

any rate, foreseen and endorsed the view of the question which Lenin was to develop over those same years, cannot be justified either. In fact, Engels put forward a view of the correct strategy and tactics for the waging of the class struggle which has never been adopted in practice by any working-class party. The purpose of this article is to suggest that this may be one of the reasons why no working-class party in a highly developed, Western industrial country has ever achieved power.

### THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC WAY

Let us recall in turn two utterly opposed views of the correct attitude for a working-class party to adopt in its attempt to take power into its hands. There have been, first, the Social-Democratic or Reformist view, and, secondly, the Communist, Leninist or revolutionary view.

The Social-Democratic view has been, characteristically, looser and less sharply defined than the Leninist view. It has been both preached and practised in various forms and with various emphasis. In theory, as put forward, that is to say, by many of the principal Social-Democratic spokesmen, such as Kautsky and Otto Bauer, for example, it has appeared to be very near to the position of Engels as defined in his Preface. As practised, however, by Western European Social Democracy, by practical leaders of the majority of working-class parties, such as Scheidemann and Hilferding in Germany, Vandervelder in Belgium or MacDonald in Britain, and as preached by one or two Social-Democratic theorists (Bernstein in Germany and MacDonald and Snowden in Britain), it has amounted to a repudiation not only of Engels' view of the class struggle, but of the very conception of the class struggle itself.

In brief, what one or two Social-Democratic writers have said, and what every important Social-Democratic leader has always done, have been based on the following set of proposi-

tions. It has been claimed that Marx immensely exaggerated the degree to which historical events have been, and are, governed by the clash of class interests. Moreover, it is claimed that in so far as events have been and still are so motivated, this clash of interests can be fought out within the framework of the democratic institutions which had been set up within every Western European country. With this political doctrine has been associated an economic doctrine which denied Marx's theory of the inevitable decline of capitalism, and still more thoroughly denied Lenin's elaboration of that theory in his work on Imperialism. The Social Democrats based their practice, whatever some of them may have said in theory, on the view that there was nothing much in Marx's demonstration of the inevitable growth of monopoly and stagnation within every capitalist system (basically due to the drag of the falling rate of profit), and that consequently the centrifugal tendency of every capitalism to break out through aggressive imperialism into war, was also non-existent, or at any rate greatly exaggerated. Hence, concludes the theory, there was nothing either political or economic to prevent an almost imperceptible growth into power, by purely democratic and constitutional means, of the party of the Labour movement. In the minds of the right-wing Social Democrats, of such theorists as Bernstein or of such politicians as MacDonald, this view came to amount to a complete repudiation of any idea of the class struggle as the main historical determinant.

We know only too well what was the fate of this theory, and of the practice which was based upon it. The theory became bankrupt, the practice became treachery. There is now conclusive evidence that Marx was not wrong when he placed the class struggle in the centre of his picture of human history as its great determining factor. It is equally clear that Marx was right when he foretold that every national capitalism would congeal into stagnation at home and would

burst out into imperialist aggression abroad. There is, moreover, conclusive evidence that democratic institutions cannot be relied upon as guarantees of capitalist acquiescence in the assumption of power on the part of the working class. We now know that Labour Governments such as the two British Labour Governments in the 1920's or the Blum administration in the 1930's, which rely on the normal capitalist process of profit-making to sustain the economy and provide employment for the population while social reforms are being carried through, are engulfed in a marsh of economic stagnation. We now know that Labour movements such as the German or Austrian, which rely on their opponents' maintaining the framework of democratic institutions, merely prepare the way for the Fascist tyrants and torturers.

We know also that the Left or Left-Centre sub-variety of this general Social-Democratic point of view leads to no better results. The leading exponent of this Left-Centre view was Kautsky in Germany, and much its ablest practitioner was Otto Bauer in Austria. It is true that the Austrian movement, dominated by the ideas of Bauer, did fight for its existence. But it fought so late (after, on Bauer's own admission, surrendering, out of a fetishistic respect for democracy, all opportunities of success to its opponents) that the unfortunate Austrian workers could save nothing but their honour.

### THE LENINIST WAY

As the alternative and antithesis to this Social-Democratic point of view, there has grown up during the past forty years the Communist, or Leninist, view, of how the working class may hope to take power. This view is based on the following foundations.

First, it re-emphasises Marx's insistence on the clash of class interests as the essential determining factor of human history. Lenin did not, on the whole, suggest that the class struggle is the sole determinant of historical events, though

he came near to doing so. A good deal of the contemporary doctrine of the International appears to me to do this.

Second, it is laid down that the existence, or non-existence, of democratic institutions in any given community is basically irrelevant to the question of how the working-class movement may get power. Lenin never suggested that democracy itself, i.e., the ideal of government on behalf of, and by, the people, was not of supreme importance. On the contrary, he reiterated that the achievement of the maximum degree of democracy possible, even while capitalism was still in existence, was a matter of the greatest importance. And he wrote that the object of a working-class régime, on its political side, was, precisely, to perfect and complete democracy in every possible way (e.g., his famous passage on the necessity of associating every cook in the actual work of governing the Soviet Union).

Lenin unquestionably regarded socialism as indissolubly connected with the practice of the fullest and freest possible democratic institutions imaginable. Nor, I repeat, did Lenin despise democratic institutions in capitalist States, in the sense that he denied the importance of these institutions to the Labour movement. He was never an anti-Parliamentarian in the old Glasgow sense. He was, and, of course, so is the Communist International to-day, thoroughly in favour of the use by the working-class movement, for its own purposes, of every scrap of democracy and political liberty which may exist in any given country.

But Lenin did reiterate his settled conviction that in every country of the world, including the great Western democracies (i.e. Britain, France and America), there was no possibility that the transition to a collectivised Socialist economy could be made within the democratic framework. He repeatedly stated the view that the class struggle would inevitably rise to such a white heat that one side or the other would be bound to break through this democratic

framework during the course of the painful transition to socialism. For this reason, he bade the British Labour movement, for example, to "prepare for a heavy civil war". This was not because Lenin desired a civil war, or under-estimated the horrors and tragedies which it would produce, but because he regarded any hope that the transition to socialism in such a community as Britain could be achieved without such a civil war as a dangerous illusion, the existence of which would inevitably result, not in the avoidance of civil war, but in the workers' defeat in the civil war when it did come.

Third, from this view of democracy, Lenin derived his re-emphasis of Marx's and Engels' theory of the State. He, like them, saw the State as exclusively an organ of class rule, and he laid special emphasis on a particular passage in Marx where the latter writes (in connection with the Paris Commune) that the working class cannot take over the existing State apparatus, but must break it to pieces and set up a new apparatus of its own. Lenin gave to this statement of Marx's an extremely wide and deep application. This doctrine, for him, did not mean merely that the working class, when it got power, would need to sack most, or all, of the civil servants, functionaries, etc., of the old State. Lenin meant that the existing institutions, including, for example, Parliament, the Army and Navy and Air Force, all the organs of local government, the educational system, etc., must be completely destroyed, and alternative and different institutions serving analogous functions for the working class must be set up. Thus, Soviets must succeed Parliament as the representative institutions of the community; a new and Red Army, Navy and Air Force must take the place of the old Army, Navy and Air Force, which must be dispersed; a new apparatus of local government must be created and the whole existing machinery destroyed; and so on in regard to all the organisations of public life. Since this was so, Lenin

argued, it was absolutely clear that the framework of democracy and legality would be broken through in the course of the struggle. For while it was possible to imagine that the working class might be able to take over the existing machinery and govern by democratic means, it was impossible to imagine that anything except a working-class dictatorship, capable of forcibly crushing all capitalist resistance, could accomplish this immense and, in his view, indispensable task of breaking up all established public institutions and substituting new ones for them.

Fourth, Lenin re-emphasised Marx's prediction of the inevitability of the growth of capitalist monopoly. He does not, as a matter of fact, lay much emphasis on the declining rate of profit, although, of course, he accepts it, or on the inevitable emergence of a strong tendency to stagnation within the highly developed and industrialised countries. It was, however, the appearance of this tendency to stagnation as one of the dominant characteristics of capitalism after 1918 which, above all in Britain, exposed the bankruptcy of Social-Democratic practice, as exemplified by the two MacDonald administrations. It was certainly this factor which above all opened my eyes to the fact that MacDonald's strategy must bring ruin to every Labour movement which adopted it. If, for example, it had not been for the tendency of capitalism in its present decline to run into vast and profound economic depressions, such as that of 1929, and to fail to recover completely from these depressions, it might well have been that the British Labour movement would, in spite of everything, have secured a steadily increasing grip upon power in Britain. (Indeed, I have always believed that, in spite of the onset of these depressions and of the ever-deepening general tendency to stagnation, the Labour movement might well have continued to thrive and grow, if its leaders had made any vigorous attempt to cope with the onset of stagnation.)

Fifth, Lenin laid his main economic emphasis on the



corollary to his acceptance of Marx's prediction of economic decline. Capitalism's only way of meeting, and, for a time, overcoming, this decline was to turn to all-round imperialist expansion. This, because of the unevenness of capitalist development as between the rival Empires, inevitably led to recurrent imperialist wars.

### THE REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATIST CONCLUSION

It was, perhaps, historical events themselves rather than Lenin's own doctrine which gave overwhelming significance to the final conclusion to Lenin's analysis. Lenin never laid it down that the only opportunity for the working class to get power lay in the occurrence of one of these inter-imperialist wars. But the fact that the only occasion on which the workers did get power arose as a result of imperialist war inevitably led to this implication being derived from the general Leninist view. The Russian Communist Party got power on behalf of the Russian workers as a result, moreover, of the specific application of Lenin's "revolutionary defeatist" policy, applied in an imperialist war.

The revolutionary defeatist policy has already been explained in these pages. From the point of view of the struggle for power, what is important to note is that this strategy, successfully executed by means of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in 1917, did lead to the crushing of all capitalist resistance and to the socialisation of Russian industry. In the midst of the present war, therefore, it is inevitable that this revolutionary defeatist strategy, designed to culminate in what may be called the Brest-Litovsk gambit, should appear to some as the real culmination and essence of Leninism. The question of the hour is: Can the workers of the West get power by this method? Can they get power, that is to say, by a relentless intensification of the class struggle, when their bourgeoisie is engaged in war, thus securing the defeat of that bourgeoisie at the hands of its imperialist rival, and

then beating off that rival in the moment of his victory? If this strategy will work in the 1940's in the West, as it worked in 1917 in the East, then Leninism, as the doctrine has been developed by the Communist International over the past twenty years, will have proved itself justified. But if not, not.

### THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE

Has, then, the present war yet provided us with evidence which indicates whether the Leninist strategy, culminating in revolutionary defeatism and the Brest-Litovsk gambit, is still a practicable road by which the working class may seek to achieve power? This war has already witnessed the defeat of the bourgeoisie of a number of small Powers, and of one great Power. It may be extremely difficult to interpret the evidence afforded by these events, but it is certain that they do afford evidence which it would be criminal for the Labour movement to refuse to consider.

At first sight, at any rate, the fact that sticks out from these events is that neither in the case of the collapse of Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium, nor in the case of the collapse of France was there the slightest sign of an attempt, even, on the part of the working-class forces to use the supposed opportunity of the *débâcle* of their own bourgeoisie to take power into their own hands. It may be said, and with considerable truth, that this fact is not of great significance in the case of Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland or Belgium. These were small States essentially subsidiary to the Great Powers, only partially and in varying degrees independent. Hence the collapse of the bourgeoisies of these States cannot be regarded as first-rate world political events. It may be claimed that, if the bourgeoisie of such States as these are conquered by a neighbouring imperialist Power, there is no opportunity for the workers to take power, for the imperialist forces rapidly occupy the whole of the

territory, preventing any possibility of a Brest-Litovsk peace. This is quite true. At the same time, it is remarkable that in the case of the collapse of none of these small States did the revolutionary wing of the working-class movement emerge as a national leadership, rallying the people in any form of struggle against the imperialist Power which had occupied the country.

But in any event this objection does not apply in the case of the collapse of the French bourgeoisie. Here we have a classical example of what in fact happens when "one's own" bourgeoisie is defeated in the present war. The French Communist Party, by far the most powerful and effective in Western Europe, had pursued the revolutionary defeatist policy, from the moment of its adoption by the International, with undeviating thoroughness and vigour. They had devoted all their great energies and considerable resources to persuading the French people that this was an unjust imperialist war, fought out between the rival bourgeoisies of Europe, for a re-division of colonial spoils. In particular the French people were, they said, being used as the catspaw of the great financial interests of the City of London; the French people, the Communists reiterated, had nothing to gain by fighting in such a war. The extent to which the French Communist Party succeeded in permeating the French people, and the French Army in particular, with this point of view is a matter of heated controversy. But at any rate it did its level best for nine months along these lines.

Thus the stage was precisely set last May for a repetition of the Brest-Litovsk gambit in the event of a defeat of the French bourgeoisie. And I can confirm from my own experience what has been said by a previous writer in this volume, that members of the Communist International in this country confidently and eagerly expected from one day to the next that, as the German armies rolled over the plains of Northern France, risings would take place in Paris and

throughout unoccupied territory; the French workers would assume power; a separate peace of a Brest-Litovsk character would be offered to the Germans: if they accepted it, a Red France would be organised in unoccupied territory; if the Germans refused such a peace, national working-class resistance would be organised.

I went on to record before the French defeat, that this glowing prospect was, unfortunately, a total illusion. I judged it to be an illusion because of four or five specific factors of difference between the situation in Western Europe in 1940 and that which existed in Eastern Europe in 1917. It seemed to me impossible to anticipate that the working class of one of the Western bourgeoisies, defeated by the Germans in this war, would have the slightest opportunity of taking or of retaining power. I felt sufficient confidence in this pessimistic conclusion to cause me in April to repudiate the revolutionary defeatist line of the International, as one which must lead, not to working-class, but to Fascist, triumph in the present situation. But I could not help hoping passionately that I was wrong. I awaited the event, at the time of the collapse of France, only too anxious to confess my error, if in fact the French working class were able to seize their opportunity.

### THE TEST IN FRANCE

As we all know, the event confirmed the most negative possible judgment as to the opportunity for working-class power being reached along the revolutionary defeatist road. Not only did the French working class not take power, but the French Communist Party was unable to make any gesture even towards doing so.

It is, of course, because of the primary importance of the evidence afforded by the military defeat of the French bourgeoisie that controversy rages so viciously on this subject. There is nothing which members of the Communist

Party so passionately resent as the statement that the nine months of revolutionary defeatist work put in by the French Party played any part in producing the actual defeat. But as a matter of fact, all this controversy is more or less irrelevant. There is very little point in demonstrating that, of course, it was the French Fascists who betrayed the country; that Social-Democratic weakness and vacillation played an important part in that betrayal; that the French Communist Party was not in undisputed leadership of the French working class. All that is obvious. These facts were part of the objective situation which had to be weighed in estimating whether the revolutionary defeatist line had a chance of success. (As a matter of fact, the French Communist Party was probably more rather than less influential in the French working class before the French collapse of 1940 than were the Bolsheviks in Russia before the 1917 revolution.) The remarkable and undeniable fact remains that when history struck the balance it was found utterly impossible to make any move even towards carrying through the Brest-Litovsk gambit.

The fundamental factors which have made it impossible to win power today by means of the revolutionary defeatist line have already been set out in this volume. If I may be forgiven for briefly recapitulating them for the purpose of the present argument, they are:

1. The difference in the geographical situation—in the fact that in the West there is no Siberia to retire to if need be.
2. The decisive change in military technique since 1917; the appearance of the tank and the bomber, making possible conquest and occupation, even of a Great Power, at an incomparably more rapid pace than ever before. (Roughly speaking, the speed of an advancing army remained constant from the time of Julius Cæsar to 1939: it

was the speed of a marching infantryman. To-day it is the speed of a motorised unit, say thirty to forty miles an hour, and, so far as advanced artillery preparation is concerned, the speed of a bombing aeroplane, two or three hundred miles an hour.) Moreover, this change in military technique (it is, of course, a reflection of the productive forces having reached a new level of development) is even more important in respect of the possibility of holding down indefinitely a hostile population than in respect of the initial conquest.

3. The psychological, subjective, difference in the attitude of mind of the peoples of the Western democratic capitalisms to-day and the attitude of mind of the Russian workers and peasants in 1917, towards their respective bourgeoisies. This difference makes it an obvious psychological impossibility first to destroy, by means of revolutionary defeatist propaganda, the people's will to resist the imperialist antagonist, and then to mobilise and organise resistance *à l'outrance*, first to their own bourgeoisie, and then to the imperialist antagonist, if he still persists in his attack.

4. The character and importance of fascism as a new and higher form of imperialism, capable of destroying the very roots of the working-class movement in any country which it occupies, to a degree inconceivable to the older imperialisms of Lenin's day.

I had come to these conclusions last spring, before the matter was put to the test. Now the matter has been tested out, and these conclusions turn out to have been correct. No doubt it may be said that the evidence afforded by the collapse of a single Great Power, i.e. France, is not conclusive; that although the conquest of French imperialism by German imperialism offered no opportunity for the French workers to take power, yet the conquest of British imperialism by German imperialism, for instance, would offer the

British workers an opportunity to take power. To this we can only reply that, in the case of historical and political events, if you wait for conclusive evidence you will always wait until it is too late. It is true that we should not know with mathematical certainty that the conquest of a rival bourgeoisie by a Fascist Power did not offer the working class of that bourgeoisie any opportunity to take power, until the last of such bourgeoisies had been conquered by fascism. But when that had happened our certain knowledge would be of purely academic and posthumous interest.

### SOVIET HELP

An important counter argument is often advanced in this connection. It is sometimes admitted by the spokesmen of the Communist International that the above-mentioned factors have made the revolutionary defeatist strategy more difficult. But, it is argued, this increased difficulty is more than counterbalanced by the great new factor of the existence of the Soviet Union. It is true, it is argued, that it is more difficult for a working class taking power in the face of a successful German invasion, for example, to maintain itself, because of tanks and bombers. But to-day a working class in that position would have the invaluable assistance of the Soviet Union.

This is a real factor, which certainly should not be lost sight of. But if, as has been shown in Chapter IV, it played no part whatever in the actual example which we have before us: if the question of Soviet intervention on behalf of the French workers could not even arise, for the French workers never had an opportunity to take power, and if they had, their crushing by the German *Panzerdivisionen* and the German Air Force would have been literally a matter of hours; what possible reason or assurance could we have that the Soviet Union would be in a better position to intervene on behalf

of the British workers, for example, in a comparable situation? Great Britain is even more geographically remote from the Soviet Union than is France. It is even smaller. It would be, in the event of the defeat of the British bourgeoisie, even easier to occupy completely by mechanised forces, or to destroy totally by air bombardment. To think that the Soviet Union, with the best will in the world, could save a working-class British Government, taking power somewhere on the farther side of the Pennines after a British defeat by Germany, is the saddest little piece of wishful thinking which has been put forward in the whole controversy.

### WHAT TO DO?

If it has to be admitted, as sooner or later it will have to be, that the revolutionary defeatist, Brest-Litovsk, line is no longer applicable to the situation of the West, what has to be done? The other, or Social-Democratic, method of reaching power was exhaustively tried out in the twenty years between the two great wars, and was shown to be bankrupt. It is impossible to return to it. There remains, in my opinion, the approach originally advocated by Engels in his Preface to *Class Struggles in France*. It would not be accurate to call this a centrist line, attempting to find a half-way house between the Social-Democratic and Communist policies. It is rather a third approach, different from either.

There is, as a matter of fact, a good deal of evidence which could be produced (see, for example, Lenin's endorsement of Engels' denunciation of those who refused to make compromises with the bourgeoisie, *Selected Works*, Vol. VI, page 208, and the whole of Left-Wing Communism) that Lenin hoped and expected that the Communist Parties of the West would adopt what I will call for short this Engelean attitude to the struggle for power. At any rate, such an attitude might be held to be compatible with Lenin's views. How-



ever, controversies as to what a dead man would or would not have thought are never very fruitful.

The Engelean approach is one to which many spokesmen of the International and, for that matter, many Left-Wing Social Democrats, have paid lip service from time to time. It is the obvious attitude of combining effectively legal work, i.e. the very utmost use of the democratic institutions of the community, with the repudiation of all illusions that the governing class will certainly and in all circumstances adhere to these democratic institutions. But today such an approach will have to be based upon one new factor in the situation. It is this. There is no longer the slightest doubt that a new method of carrying on a capitalist, or rather perhaps quasi-capitalist, economy has been found. During the past ten years it has been found possible to combat, in some cases effectively, the hitherto overwhelming tendency to stagnation of capitalism in its present phase of decline. This has been done by means of a characteristic system of central controls. These central controls are based above all on financial control. The possibility of their development has arisen from the growth of monopoly in the banking field, which has produced a change in the nature of money itself, which ceases to be a commodity and becomes an instrument for the conscious control of the economic system. (Marx, as a matter of fact—*Kapital*, III, 607—foresaw that this might happen.)

We now know that this system of controls may be set up under ultra-reactionary, or Fascist, auspices. If so it will be used for the purposes of imperialist conquest. Or it may be set up, as in the case of the New Deal in America, with a welfare objective in view, and be used, as on the whole it has been in America, for raising the standard of life. In a sentence, the controls may be used for either a welfare or a warfare objective. There is now no doubt that this new possibility of the further development of capitalism exists.

According to Marx, no economic system ever disappears until the last possibility of its development has been exhausted. Therefore, it is idle to think that we can jump over this stage. On the contrary, it must be lived through. The only question at issue is whether it will be lived through in the Fascist, German style or in the New Deal, American style. That is still an open question so far as Great Britain is concerned. The answer to it depends very largely on whether or not we prevent our defeat at the hands of fascism in this war. But it depends also upon whether the Left, and above all the thinking, conscious, Marxist Left, recognises that this is the phase of development which we are in. Effective political action today is quite impossible unless it is realised that the class struggle is being, and will be in the next phase, fought out precisely over the question of who is to use the central controls which are being set up, and which will be set up with ever-increasing rapidity.

It is a sign of the profound intellectual ossification (or tendency to bone in the head) of most Marxist thinkers in this country that they utterly refuse to recognise the existence of such facts as these. Because these facts may not be pleasant, because they upset preconceived notions, they are just ignored, and immense pressure is put upon everyone to ignore them also. All those who are incapable of genuinely thinking for themselves yield to this pressure, and Marxist thinking, which should be the most illuminating of all guides to action, becomes a set of blinkers.

If it is asked, how in detail, by employing the Engelean approach, can we win the central controls for welfare instead of for profits, the answer is that such blue-prints are a question of tactics and not of strategy, with which I am here exclusively concerned. Questions of that kind can be answered in action alone. But one thing is certain; there can be no successful action if the strategy is wrong, and if at the same time a crucial new factor in the situation is ignored.

## CHAPTER X

# PATRIOTS AND REVOLUTIONARIES

By GEORGE ORWELL

*January 1941*

THE FACT THAT there has been no general election or other major political event in England during the past twelve months ought not to hide from us the swing of opinion that is taking place beneath the surface. England is on the road to revolution, a process that started, in my opinion, about the end of 1938. But *what kind* of revolution depends partly on our recognising in time the real forces at work and not using phrases out of nineteenth-century textbooks as a substitute for thought.

England spent the first eight months of war in almost the same state of twilight sleep as it had spent the eight preceding years. There was widespread vague discontent, but no active defeatism, as the votes at the by-elections showed. In so far as it thought about the war the nation comforted itself with two completely false strategic theories, one of them official, the other peculiar to the Left. The first was that Hitler would be driven by the British blockade to smash himself to pieces against the Maginot Line; the other was that by agreeing to partition Poland, Stalin had in some mysterious manner "stopped" Hitler, who would thereafter be unable to perpetrate further conquests. Both have been utterly falsified by events. Hitler simply walked round the Maginot Line and entered Rumania via Hungary, as could have been foreseen from the start by anyone able to read a map. But the acceptance of these geographical absurdities was a reflection of the general apathy. So long as France

stood, the nation did not feel itself in danger of conquest, and on the other hand the easy victory which was supposedly to be brought about by "economic" means, leaving Chamberlain in power and everything just as it had been before, did not inspire much enthusiasm. No doubt most of us would have preferred a victory for the British business-men to a victory for Hitler, but it was not a thing to grow lyrical about. The notion that *England could only win the war by passing through revolution* had barely been mooted.

Then came the startling disasters of May and June. Although there was no political upheaval to mark it, no one who used his ears and eyes at the time could mistake the leftward swing of public opinion. The British people had had the jolt that they had been needing for years past. There had been demonstrated to them in a way that could not be mistaken the decay of their ruling class, the inefficiency of private capitalism, the urgent need for economic reorganisation and the destruction of privilege. Had any real leadership existed on the Left, there is little doubt that the return of the troops from Dunkirk could have been the beginning of the end of British capitalism. It was a moment at which the willingness for sacrifice and drastic changes extended not only to the working class but to nearly the whole of the middle class, whose patriotism, when it comes to the pinch, is stronger than their sense of self-interest. There was apparent, sometimes in the most unexpected people, a feeling of being on the edge of a new society in which much of the greed, apathy, injustice and corruption of the past would have disappeared. But no adequate leadership existed, the strategic moment passed, the pendulum swung back. The expected invasion failed to take place, and terrible though the air-raids have been, they were nothing to what had been feared. Since about October confidence has come back, and with confidence, apathy. The forces of reaction promptly counter-attacked and began to consolidate their

position, which had been badly shaken in the summer days when it looked as though they would have to turn to the common people for help. The fact that, against all expectation, England had not been conquered had vindicated the ruling classes to some extent, and the matter was clinched by Wavell's victory in Egypt. Following promptly on Sidi Barrani came Margesson's entry into the Cabinet—an open, unmistakable slap in the face for all shades of progressive opinion. It was not possible to bring Chamberlain out of his grave, but Margesson's appointment was the nearest approach to it.

However, the defeats of the summer had brought out something more important than the tendency, normal to nearly all régimes, to swing to the Left in moments of disaster and to the Right in moments of security. What it had brought out was the integrity of British national feeling. After all, and in spite of all, the common people were patriotic. It is of the profoundest importance to face this fact and not try to dispose of it with easy formulæ. It may possibly be true that "the proletariat has no country". What concerns us, however, is the fact that the proletariat, at any rate in England, *feels* that he has a country, and will act accordingly. The conventional Marxist notion that "the workers" don't care twopence whether or not their country is conquered is as false as the *Daily Telegraph* notion that every Englishman chokes with emotion on hearing "Rule Britannia". It is quite true that the working class, unlike the middle class, have no imperialist feeling and dislike patriotic bombast. Almost any working man sees promptly the equivocal meaning of "YOUR Courage, YOUR Cheerfulness, YOUR Resolution will bring US Victory". But let it appear that England is about to be conquered by a foreign Power, and the case is altered. There was a moment in the summer when our Allies had deserted us, our army had been heavily defeated and had barely escaped with the loss of all its equipment, and

England, internally, was all but defenceless. Then, if ever, was the moment for a stop-the-war movement to arise, to the tune of "The enemy is in your own country", etc., etc. Well, that was exactly the moment at which the British working class flung itself into a huge effort to increase armaments-production and prevent invasion. Eden's appeal for Local Defence Volunteers got a quarter of a million recruits in the first day and another million in the next few weeks; I have reason to believe that a larger number could have been obtained. Let it be remembered that at that moment the invasion was expected to happen immediately and that the men who enrolled themselves believed that they would have to fight the German army with shotguns and bottles of petrol. It is perhaps more significant that in the six months since that date the Home Guard—a spare-time, practically unpaid organisation—has barely fallen off in numbers, except through the calling-up of the younger members. And now let anyone compare the membership figures of the Home Guard with those of the political parties which assume that the common man is not patriotic. The Communist Party, the I.L.P., Mosley's organisation and the P.P.U. may perhaps have between them an unstable membership of 150,000. In by-elections held since the war, only one stop-the-war candidate has even saved his election deposit. Is not the conclusion obvious, except to those who are unable to face facts?

But the revelation of working-class patriotism coincided with the swing of opinion that I have spoken of earlier, the sudden perception that the existing social order was rotten. People dimly grasped—and not always so dimly, to judge from certain conversations I listened to in pubs at the time—that it was our duty both to defend England and to turn it into a genuine democracy. England is in some ways politically backward, extremist slogans are not bandied to and fro as they are in continental countries, but the feeling of all

true patriots and all true Socialists is at bottom reducible to the "Trotskyist" slogan: "The war and the revolution are inseparable." We cannot beat Hitler without passing through revolution, nor consolidate our revolution without beating Hitler. Useless to pretend, with the Communists, that you can somehow get rid of Hitler by surrendering to him. Useless to imagine, with the *Daily Telegraph*, that you can defeat Hitler without disturbing the *status quo*. A capitalist Britain cannot defeat Hitler; its potential resources and its potential allies cannot be mobilised. Hitler can only be defeated by an England which can bring to its aid the progressive forces of the world—an England, therefore, which is fighting against the sins of its own past. The Communists and others profess to believe that the defeat of Hitler means no more than a renewed stabilisation of British capitalism. This is merely a lie designed to spread disaffection in the Nazi interest.<sup>1</sup> Actually, as the Communists themselves would have pointed out a year ago, the opposite is the truth: British capitalism can only survive by coming to terms with fascism. Either we turn England into a Socialist democracy or by one route or another we become part of the Nazi empire; there is no third alternative.

But part of the process of turning England into a Socialist democracy is to avoid conquest from without. We cannot, as some people appear to imagine, call off the war by arrangement and then proceed to have a private revolution with no outside interference. Something rather of this kind happened in the Russian Revolution, partly because Russia is a difficult country to invade, partly because the chief European Powers were at the time engaged in fighting one another. For England, "revolutionary defeatism" would only be a thinkable policy if the chief centres of population and industry in the British Empire were in, say, Australia. Any

<sup>1</sup> I feel bound to dissociate myself from the words "in the Nazi interest", unless the word "objectively" is understood, as no doubt the author intends.—*Editor*.

attempt to overthrow our ruling class *without* defending our shores would simply lead to the prompt occupation of Britain by the Nazis, and the setting-up of a reactionary puppet Government, as in France. In the social revolution that we have got to carry through there can be no such gap in our defences as existed, potentially, in the Russia of 1917-1918. A country within gunshot of the Continent and dependent on imports for its food is not in a position to make a Brest-Litovsk peace. Our revolution can only be a revolution behind the British fleet. But that is another way of saying that we must do the thing that British extremist parties have always failed to do, the thing they have alternately declared to be unnecessary and impossible—to win over the middle classes.

Economically there are in England two main dividing lines. One is—at the present standard of living—at £5 a week, the other at £2,000 a year. The class that lies between, though not numerous compared with the working class, holds a key position, because in it is included practically the whole of the technocracy (engineers, chemists, doctors, airmen, etc., etc.) without which a modern industrial country could not exist for a week. It is a fact that these people benefit very little from the existing order of society and that their way of life would not be very profoundly altered by the change-over to a Socialist economy. It is also a fact that they have always tended to side with the capitalist class and against their natural allies, the manual workers, partly because of an educational system designed to have just that effect, partly because of the out-of-dateness of Socialist propaganda. Nearly all Socialists who even *sounded* as though they meant business have always talked in terms of the old-fashioned “proletarian revolution”, a conception which was formed before the modern technical middle class came into being. To the middle-class man, “revolution” has been presented as a process by which he and his kind are killed off or exiled, and the entire control of



the State is handed over to manual workers, who, he is well aware, would be unable to run a modern industrial country unaided. The concept of revolution as a more or less voluntary act of the majority of the people—the only kind of revolution that is conceivable under modern Western conditions—has always been regarded as heretical.

But how, when you aim at any fundamental change, can you get the majority of the people on your side? The position is that a few people are actively for you, a few actively against you, and the great mass are capable of being pushed one way or the other. The capitalist class, as a whole, *must* be against you. No hope that these people will see the error of their ways, or abdicate gracefully. Our job is not to try to win them over, but to isolate them, expose them, make the mass of the people see their reactionary and semi-treacherous nature. But how about the indispensable middle class that I have spoken of above? Can you really bring them over to your side? Is there any chance of turning an airman, a naval officer, a railway engineer or what-not into a convinced Socialist? The answer is that a revolution which waited for the full conversion of the entire population would never happen. The question is not so much whether the men in key positions are fully on your side as whether they are sufficiently against you to sabotage. It is no use hoping that the airmen, destroyer-commanders, etc. on whom our very existence depends will all turn into orthodox Marxists; but we can hope, if we approach them rightly, that they will continue to do their jobs when they see behind their backs a Labour Government putting through Socialist legislation. The approach to these people is through their patriotism. "Sophisticated" Socialists may laugh at the patriotism of the middle classes, but let no one imagine that it is a sham. Nothing that makes men willing to die in battle—and relative to numbers more of the middle class than of the working class are killed in war—is a sham. These people will be with

us if they can be made to see that a victory over Hitler demands the destruction of capitalism; they will be against us if we let it appear that we are indifferent to England's independence. We have got to make far clearer than it has been made hitherto the fact that at this moment of time a revolutionary has to be a patriot, and a patriot has to be a revolutionary. "Do you want to defeat Hitler? Then you must be ready to sacrifice your social prestige. Do you want to establish Socialism? Then you must be ready to defend your country." That is a crude way of putting it, but it is along those lines that our propaganda must move. That is the thing that we missed the chance to say in the summer months, when the rottenness of private capitalism was already partly clear to people who a year earlier would have described themselves as Conservatives, and when people who all their lives had laughed at the very notion of patriotism discovered that they did not want to be ruled by foreigners after all.

At the moment we are in a period of backwash, when the forces of reaction, reassured by a partial victory, are regaining the ground they lost earlier. Margesson goes into the Cabinet, the army is bidden to polish its buttons, the Home Guard is brought more and more under the control of Blimps, there is talk of suppressing this newspaper and that, the Government bargains with Pétain and Franco—big and small, these things are indications of the general trend. But presently, in the spring perhaps, or even earlier, there will come another moment of crisis. And that, quite possibly, will be our final chance. At that moment it may be decided once and for all whether the issues of this war are to be made clear and who is to control the great middling mass of people, working class and middle class, who are capable of being pushed in either one direction or the other.

Much of the failure of the English Left is traceable to the tendency of Socialists to criticise current movements from the outside instead of trying to influence them from within.

When the Home Guard was formed, it was impossible not to be struck by the lack of political instinct which led Socialists of nearly all shades to stand aloof from the whole business, not seeing in this sudden spontaneous movement any opportunity for themselves. Here were a million men springing, as it were, out of the ground, asking for arms to defend their country against a possible invader and organising themselves into a military body almost without direction from above. Would one not have expected those Socialists who had talked for years about "democratising the army", etc., etc. to do their utmost to guide this new force along the right political lines? Instead of which the vast majority of Socialists paid no attention, or, in the case of the doctrinaires, said weakly, "This is fascism." It apparently did not occur to them that the political colour of such a force, compelled by the circumstances of the time to organise itself independently, would be determined by the people who were in it. Only a handful of Spanish War veterans like Tom Wintringham and Hugh Slater saw the danger and the opportunity and have since done their best, in the face of discouragement from several quarters, to form the Home Guard into a real People's Army. At the moment the Home Guard stands at the cross-roads. It is patriotic, the bulk of its members are definitely anti-Fascist, but it is politically undirected. A year hence, if it still exists, it may be a democratic army capable of having a strong political influence on the regular forces, or it may be a sort of S.A. officered by the worst sections of the middle class. A few thousand Socialists within its ranks, energetic and knowing what they want, could prevent the second development. But they can only do so *from within*. And what I have said of the Home Guard applies to the whole war effort and the steady tendency of Socialists to hand executive power to their enemies. In pre-war days, when the appeasement policy still ruled, it was an ironical thing to read through a membership list of the House

of Commons. It was Labour and Communist members who clamoured for a "firm stand against Germany", but it was Conservative members who were members of the R.N.V.R. or R.A.F.V.R.

It is only if we associate ourselves with the war effort, by acts as well as words, that we have any chance of influencing national policy; it is only if we have some sort of control over national policy that the war can be won. If we simply stand aside, make no effort to permeate the armed forces with our ideas or to influence those who are patriotic but politically neutral, if we allow the pro-Nazi utterances of the Communists to be taken as representative of "Left" opinion, events will pass us by. We shall have failed to use the lever which the patriotism of the common man has put into our hands. The "politically unreliable" will be elbowed out of positions of power, the Blimps will settle themselves tighter in the saddle, the governing classes will continue the war in their own way. And their way can only lead to ultimate defeat. To believe that, it is not necessary to believe that the British governing class are consciously pro-Nazi. But so long as they are in control the British war-effort is running on one cylinder. Since they will not—*cannot*, without destroying themselves—put through the necessary social and economic changes, they cannot alter the balance of forces, which is at present heavily against us. While our social system is what it is, how can they set free the enormous energies of the English people? How can they turn the coloured peoples from exploited coolies into willing allies? How (even if they wanted to) can they mobilise the revolutionary forces of Europe? Does anyone suppose that the conquered populations are going to rebel on behalf of the British dividend-drawers? Either we turn this war into a revolutionary war or we lose it. And we can only turn it into a revolutionary war if we can bring into being a revolutionary movement capable of appealing to a majority of the people; a movement, therefore, not

sectarian, not defeatist, not "anti-British", not resembling in any way the petty fractions of the extreme left, with their heresy-hunting and their Græco-Latin jargon. The alternative is to leave the conduct of the war to the British ruling class and to go gradually down through exhaustion into defeat—called, no doubt, not "defeat" but "negotiated peace"—leaving Hitler in secure control of Europe. And does anyone in his senses feel much doubt as to what that will mean? Does anyone except a handful of Blackshirts and pacifists pay any attention to Hitler's claims to be "the friend of the poor man", the "enemy of plutocracy", etc.? Are such claims credible, after the past seven years? Do not his deeds speak louder than his words?

At George V's Silver Jubilee there occurred a popular demonstration which was "spontaneous" in a different sense from the organised loyalty-parades of totalitarian countries. In the south of England, at any rate, the response was big enough to surprise the authorities and lead them to prolong the celebrations for an extra week. In certain very poor London streets, which the people had decorated of their own accord, I saw chalked across the asphalt two slogans: "Poor, but loyal" and "Landlords, keep away" (or "No landlord wanted"). It is most improbable that these slogans had been suggested by any political party. Most doctrinaire Socialists were furious at the time, and not wrongly. Certainly it is appalling that people living in the London slums should describe themselves as "poor, but loyal". But there would have been far more reason for despair if the other slogan had been "Three cheers for the landlord" (or words to that effect). For was there not something significant, something we might have noticed at the time, in that instinctive antithesis between the King and the landlord? Up to the death of George V the King probably stood for a majority of English people as the symbol of national unity. These people believed—quite mistakenly, of course—in the King as someone who was on

their side against the monied class. They were patriotic, but they were not Conservative. And did they not show a sounder instinct than those who tell us that patriotism is something disgraceful and national liberty a matter of indifference? Although the circumstances were far more dramatic, was it not the same impulse that moved the Paris workers in 1793, the Communards in 1871, the Madrid trade unionists in 1936—the impulse to defend one's country, and to make it a place worth living in?

## CHAPTER XI

### AN IMMEDIATE PROGRAMME

By VICTOR GOLLANZ

*November and December, 1940*

WHERE, AT THE beginning of this second winter of the war, do we stand?

First of all we stand for victory, as the man in the street understands the term. With "defeatism", whether of the Right or of the Left, we can have nothing whatever to do. Whether of the Right or Left: for, while the motive of Left defeatism is as honourable as that of Right defeatism is dishonourable, the objective *effect* of both is the same—to help on a Hitler victory. This was seen only too clearly in the case of France: it was Right defeatism which betrayed the country, but it was Left defeatism on the one hand, and Social-Democratic weakness on the other, which made this betrayal possible.

We stand for victory—for a decisive defeat of Hitler and his satellites—because the alternative to such victory is enslavement to foreign fascism, or to native fascism acting as its puppet, or (as in France) to both, and the doom of all progress, and more especially of all our hopes of working-class emancipation.

And we stand for victory with a particular—one might say—intellectual and emotional temper. Hating war from the bottom of our souls, we nevertheless accept, with sober self-dedication, the task that has been given us: now that the issue has *had* to be joined, against all our hopes and endeavours, in this worst and most horrible of ways, we embrace the opportunity of defeating a foul and destructive force

which embodies the very antithesis of everything for which we have always stood and striven. In spite of all the contradictions—things are not as simple as fools would like them to be—and qualifications: in spite of the element of inter-imperialist rivalry in this war, and the unworthy motives for which certain people are fighting it (and would cease to fight it only too readily if we would let them), we of the Left know that this is in essence *our* war, and we have to bring to it the same mood as was brought to *their* war by the men of '89, the men of November 1917, the men of the Commune, and the men of Spain.

The *Daily Worker* recently printed an article which contrasted the peace and happiness in the streets of Moscow with the "misery" of London at war. There *is* appalling misery in London, some of it the necessary consequence of war, some of it totally unnecessary: but one or two who read the article must have wondered whose children's children would feel prouder of their forbears—those who lived in misery as the price of taking up the challenge of fascism, when otherwise the whole world might have been engulfed by it, or those who "stood aside from the conflict" and lived at peace—even though on the calculation, maybe, that at some later date they would thus be the better able to defend the socialist fatherland?

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But if we stand firmly and squarely for victory over Hitler, we stand no less passionately, no less uncompromisingly for particular policies and a particular line of struggle, both inside and outside the war effort, at once at home and abroad. And we stand for those policies for three reasons. First, because they are the policies by which the war can be most surely won: secondly, because if it were won with other policies the result would be a disaster second only (but still very definitely second) to that of a Hitler victory: and thirdly, because the progressive adoption of these policies will



mean such a transformation from the negative to the positive that in the event we shall not merely have prevented Hitler or any native puppets he might find from enslaving us, but shall have brought into being the kind of society—or the beginnings of it—of which fascism is the antithesis. In the very act of beating back the aggressor we shall have found that way forward which we so consistently failed to find during the two decades that ended in September 1939.

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By way of instance: within our Empire we must free India, and must *not* sentence her greatest leader and one of the greatest men in the modern world to four years' rigorous imprisonment: and in Europe we must co-operate with all the progressive and anti-Fascist forces, regarding them as the very spearhead of the attack on Hitler, and must *not* intern those who have borne the first shock of Hitler's onslaught. At home, above all, we must put an end to a contrast that the bombing of London has brought into the open for even the most careless to see: between the poverty of the women and children who morning after morning line up to get a place in the Tube shelters, and the wealth of those whom we have to beg on hands and knees to lend us their money at two and a half per cent. Instead of putting monopolists in "control" of their monopolies, we must progressively create such a vested interest in public ownership, public control and social justice that, when the time comes to proceed to the establishment of real socialism in this country, it will not be the people who will have to attack in order to establish socialism, but the "interests" who will have to counter-attack—if they dare—to prevent its establishment.

If we do these things, the war will end, not in the triumph of "Britain" over "Germany", but in a peace that will safeguard the interests of the common people everywhere, and not least in Germany.

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In order that such policies may be carried through, we stand for a rapid growth in the militancy of the Labour movement. Not a "defeatist" militancy, which is a contradiction in terms, for it would mean the triumph of Hitler and the end of the Labour movement: neither open defeatism, as in the attack on the acquisition of the American destroyers, nor covert defeatism, as in the "People's Convention": but a militancy for victory and progress.

Finally, we believe that, on the political side, the Labour Party is the only possible spearhead for advance. And when we say this we do not shut our eyes either to the weaknesses and imperfections that have so sadly marred its history, or to our own mistake—the mistake of some of us, members of the Labour Party though we were—in attacking from without instead of helping from within.

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An easy answer will be ready in one or two quarters. "What!" it will be said "Co-operation with the popular forces on the continent when Halifax is at the Foreign Office? The freeing of India when they *have* imprisoned Nehru? This is Cloud Cuckoo Land, or worse: a deliberate attempt to deceive the people. Policy is shaped by the dominant class forces: the capitalist class is in control: and that is the end of the matter." Such an answer no doubt sounds impressive to lazy and impatient people who refuse to think out in its total setting the problem that confronts us, but prefer, like Lenin's infantile leftists, to "mouth revolutionary phrases" irrelevant to the actual situation; it is, nevertheless, defeatism of the worst kind—not merely "revolutionary defeatism" in the technical sense, but ordinary, downright yellow (political) cowardice. The alternatives are simple: either we refuse any co-operation with the ruling class, and precipitate a revolutionary struggle at home, or we co-operate with the ruling class in the war effort, keep them up to the mark in the war effort, while constantly attempting to increase inside

that co-operation our own strength, influence and control. If we do the first, then, given the strength, speed and aims of the Hitler war machine, we at once give the victory to Hitler and play into the hands of any elements in the ruling class that might *want* to give the victory to Hitler: if we do the second, we have the hope not only of winning *the* common war—the war against Hitler—but of winning *our* special war—the war against capitalism. And who but a traitor to the working class would prefer the certainty of the first to the hope of the second?

And although we have had many grave disappointments since Labour entered the Churchill Government, it has not been all disappointment. At the moment of writing it looks as if the Household Means Test is “dead and damned”. The details will have to be carefully watched: there may be all sorts of traps and deceptions: nevertheless it cannot be doubted that the power of Labour, inside and outside the Government, has given the death-blow, as it failed to do before the war, to what has been the very symbol of reaction in this country.

The power of Labour! It is that, and not the power of the ruling class, of which we must be growingly and victoriously conscious. There is hardly a Blimp in the country who is not beginning to realise that it is the working class which stands between Britain and annihilation: and if there can be an end to pathological inferiority and hate complexes, and if militancy can be combined with a sober realisation of just what is feasible and just what is not in a given situation, then the result will be neither defeat by Hitler nor imperialist victory over Hitler, but a Labour victory over Hitler-fascism, leading to a new Britain and a new world.

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If one were asked to set down for discussion a short programme of a round dozen points embodying in somewhat greater detail the ideas expressed above—a programme of

realistic demands which can be immediately made in view of the present balance of forces, not of course a programme of what we would do if we were in power—one might suggest the following: <sup>1</sup>

1. WIN THE WAR. The Hitler and Mussolini régimes are the “main enemy” of the working class, and (wider than the working class) of liberty, equality and fraternity everywhere. Destroy them.

(*The Hitler and Mussolini régimes.* Socialists have no more urgent duty than to counter, with the utmost watchfulness, any tendency to identify the German people with the Nazi Government, and to draw the vile conclusion that “the German people must be smashed and held down for ever”. As British towns are successively bombed, the mean and brutish find it easy to sway unthinking men and women into war-hysteria and war-hatred: and if feelings of this kind are allowed to develop, then the way is being prepared for the appalling disaster of a Carthaginian “peace”. *Now* is the time so to influence public opinion that such an ending to the war is impossible. To any friend or acquaintance who indulges in careless, foolish or evil talk (and the cry for “reprisals”, however much it may pretend to base itself on “military necessity”, “the need to break civilian morale”, etc., etc., is nothing but an expression of hatred and desire for revenge) say this: “The ordinary people of Germany are just like you and me. They have human strengths and weaknesses, human affections, human needs. They are not your enemies: they are your comrades, your fellow-sufferers. You can bring home to yourself, easily enough, the agony of a neighbour trapped for hours or days beneath the wreckage of a bombed building: the agony of a German is the same, and he is your neighbour no less because he lives, or dies, not in the next street, but in Munich or Berlin. To hate

<sup>1</sup> The programme was drafted on December 2nd, and is left substantially as originally printed. This should be borne in mind. For instance, about a month later Halifax was replaced by Eden.

him, to want to be revenged on him, is vile—the vile thing against which we are fighting. Every time you hate like that, by so much is Hitler winning. It is true that seven years of Satanic ‘education’ have corrupted a large part of the younger German generation: that is one of the reasons why we must save them, before the corruption goes deeper. But you do not hate or desire to destroy people whom you want to save.

“And look to the future. Is it conceivable that there can be sweetness and peace in Europe if the German people, eighty millions of them, are ‘permanently held down’? When the war ends let there be, not the hysteria of 1919, but an understanding that the German people, freed from Nazi corruption, must play, as perfect equals, a leading rôle in the reconstruction of Europe and the world.”

All human beings, save the rarest, are a mixture of good and bad. It is easy to make them hate: it is only a little less easy to make them feel sympathy and see reason. Every Socialist has the obligation to address himself to that latter task.)

2. Speed up and intensify the war effort to the very limit. What was lately the *probability* of defeat has now been replaced by another perspective (though we must still strain every nerve to prevent defeat): the major peril is now of a contest dragging itself on year after year, with perhaps nothing but a stalemate at the end of it. Cast away, then, the last vestige of complacency. In particular

(a) Forbid absolutely the production of luxury goods, except, when desirable, for export: ration not only all foodstuffs, but all consumption goods in ordinary demand (otherwise, as stocks fall, the rich will buy up the available supplies): let nobody buy a rationed article if he already has a sufficient quantity of it: and subsidise consumption goods wherever a subsidy is necessary to prevent such a

rise in price as would make their purchase impossible by the poorer sections of the community.

(b) Plan in an orderly fashion and in advance the transfer to war production of all labour made available by the cutting down of civilian consumption. This may involve compelling men to be trained; it certainly involves compelling the employers to train them.

(c) In order to make still more labour available for war production, train women, not by the thousands, but by the hundreds of thousands.

(d) Compel the pooling and co-ordination of resources in each vital war industry, under *threat* of nationalisation (for railways, coal, electricity, see below). In certain industries (for instance, steel and cement) set up Government factories side by side with the private ones.

(e) Acquire compulsorily essentials for the war effort, such as machine-tools. Stop appealing to owners of railway wagons to empty them as quickly as possible: take them. Instead of appealing to possessors of binoculars and high-powered cars to hand them over, take these also.

3. Cancel the railway agreement. Moore-Brabazon said the other day that he didn't like it at all, but that nationalisation was the only alternative—and apparently he liked that even less. Which shows that he is on the run: which shows further that, if there were sufficient popular agitation, nationalisation would have to be conceded. Coal-mining and electrical-power distribution are two other services the nationalisation of which can now be practicably demanded.

4. Control the credit-creating machinery of the nation in the interests of the war effort.

5. Put a single Minister in supreme charge of the industrial, economic, and financial life of the country.

6. Remove Halifax from the Foreign Office (Eden wouldn't be a bad "next step" substitute). A demand for his

removal is a *practicable* beginning to the job of transforming the Government, of which, in the present phase of the war, the superbly brave Churchill (let it be clearly stated) is the indispensable head.

7. Release Nehru, Patel and the other Indian leaders immediately. Make the Viceroy's Council responsible to the Legislative Assembly. Offer Dominion Status unconditionally on the termination of the war, without the proviso about minorities not having to accept anything to which they object—which proviso takes away with one hand what we give with the other. If the Princes and the Muslim League make a row, isn't this better than an India overwhelmingly hostile—except for the Princes? And stop the hypocrisy of publishing advertisements suggesting that India is wholeheartedly with us—just at the moment when the Legislative Assembly (a "packed" body, with Congress in a minority) has turned down the bill for financing the war, with the express object of dissociating itself from our war effort.

8. Give every bit of help to China that our own situation permits, because (a) China is fighting for independence and against international fascism, (b) help to China is the best way of countering Japan's deadly and immediate threat to the Pacific-China Seas-Indian Ocean trade routes. Sack Craigie.

9. Press on at top speed with measures for increasing the safety and comfort (such as it can be) of the civilian population during air raids. Not because their safety and comfort must be our chief consideration (it mustn't: winning the war must be our chief consideration, and the war cannot be won without considerable danger and grave discomfort for the people as a whole), but because (a) subject to this overriding necessity of winning the war, nothing—neither muddle, nor slackness, nor lack of imagination, nor red tape, nor Treasury meanness, nor class selfishness, nor business profits, nor anything else whatsoever—must stand in the way of the

workers' and people's safety; (b) while the safety of some workers could be increased at the risk of losing the war (for instance, if all workers downed tools when an alert was sounded), in general every measure for the increase of safety and comfort helps to win the war by improving the already magnificent morale.

It is maliciously untrue to say that there has been no improvement in these matters, or very little, since Herbert Morrison and Ellen Wilkinson took over. There has been a very great deal: but they inherited an abominable situation, and, as they would be the first to admit, everything that has been done has been the merest beginning. Appalling scenes still occur nightly in London and other cities.

Evacuate compulsorily all children from danger areas.

Beware of being "used" to help in exploiting, for defeatist ends, the misery which is inevitably produced by the loathsome business of war.

10. Wash out all the White Papers about the internment of aliens, with their game of "categories". Recognise two categories only—pro-fascists and anti-fascists. Set up enough tribunals to decide within three months into which category every one of the internees falls. Let these tribunals consist of men and women who really know what fascism means—and don't like it. (What about Eleanor Rathbone as chairman?) Release immediately all whom these tribunals find to be anti-fascist, and accept their help against Hitler and Mussolini.

A clear-cut policy such as this seems, in spite of what Mr. Morrison said on November 26th, to be the only correct one. Mr Morrison said that it would take ten tribunals a year to deal with all the cases; then why not forty tribunals to see the thing through in three months? To find suitable personnel for forty tribunals, from among men and women not engaged in the war effort, would present little difficulty.

And while it must be recorded that the new arrangements



announced by Mr. Morrison on that day, though open to grave objection on grounds of principle, represent a certain advance, the agitation must go on until anti-fascist aliens are treated in precisely the same way as anti-fascist British citizens.

11. Increase the number of parliamentary sessions: and cut down the number of secret sessions to the minimum genuinely demanded by security. (And instead of attacking Parliament, alleging that it is becoming a sort of Reichstag—which is to play into the hands of the Hitlers and Kennedys—publicists should, on the contrary, never tire of reminding the public how often, during the last fifteen months, Parliament has saved the bacon; and constituents should find means, which are not so difficult, of compelling a slack Member to attend with decent regularity to his duties.)

12. STATE OUR WAR AIMS. Say, among other things, that we are fighting (a) to prevent our own enslavement, (b) to release the peoples of Europe from enslavement to the German *Herrenvolk*, (c) to unify the world on the basis of economic co-operation in the interests of the common people, and on the basis, too, of such restrictions of national sovereignty as will obviate wars of aggression.

Say, not only (as we have said) that we utterly repudiate any annexationist designs, but also that we will lend no countenance whatsoever to any such designs on the part of our allies. (See a recent utterance of General Sikorski.)

Say that we are fighting not against but for the people of Germany and Italy, and so wipe out the memory of a week of speech-making by the late Mr. Chamberlain, the present Minister of Information, and one or two others (as well as some more recent utterances by Sir Robert Vansittart).

And say also that we are working for a world in which every human being shall have (a) security of livelihood; (b) a decent minimum standard of living; (c) the right of

free speech; (d) the right to impartial justice; (e) religious and cultural freedom.

Useless, however, to say these things unless we show we mean them—by carrying through, for a beginning, the other heads of this programme.

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“But how on earth can we get any of these things unless we first get a People’s Government?” I am not quite sure that I understand what is meant by a People’s Government: I gather that it is not to include Mr. Churchill, yet the last Gallup poll showed that round about ninety per cent. of “the people” support Mr. Churchill’s premiership. But however that may be, the answer is simple. Here are a number of things that “the people” really do want done: if we get them done (and we shall, if we don’t throw up our hands in what masquerades as realism, but is really defeatism), we shall find that we have got a People’s Government in the process: by which is meant a Government that, in accordance with the wishes of the overwhelming majority of our people, will defeat fascism from within as well as from without—and *from without as well as from within.*

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But the last paragraph cannot be left unqualified, for it is written in the shorthand of political polemics. The answer is not really at all “simple”: and to say “if we get this done, and we shall” suggests deceptively that it is.

This chapter, and the book as a whole, have failed of their purpose, unless one thing at least is clear: namely that, in the opinion of all the contributors, revolutionary changes, here and now, must be won in the interests of victory, and at any cost save that of defeat. The necessities of the situation are brilliantly summarised by Edgar Snow in his forthcoming book *Scorched Earth*, in which he draws a lesson from the Chinese resistance to Japan:

“Spain first demonstrated that a true democracy can be defeated only by an immense superiority of armament. The defeat of France, as we know now, was due not to this fact so much as it was to the betrayal of democracy from within, by anti-democratic political and military rulers. Challenged by the dynamic of fascism, democracy must be dynamic and ever-advancing or it collapses as in France. Although China’s democracy is primitive, it is relatively dynamic. While it remains so there is still hope of victory.

“Secondly, democracy cannot fight a successful war based on the *levée en masse* without equalising the burden among all classes. Total wars involve total populations. There is little distinction between the civilian and the front-line fighter, either as a target of enemy attack or as a factor in the mechanism of defence. Just as the mercenary army can no longer be relied upon to defend a modern state, neither can money profit remain the basis of civilian morale. Greed and exploitation must be replaced by an extension of the logic of democracy to the full range of economy. Economic democracy alone can unite a people in the same kind of brotherhood that must exist to hold an army together under fire.

“Thirdly, self-reliance is the strongest bulwark of democracy and a necessary antidote to defeatism. ‘A people can fight with the resources it happens to have,’ says Chu Teh. The loafer and the idler and the appeasement class must be thoroughly eliminated. Every citizen must be provided with productive work and responsibility, he must be given not only economic rights but economic duties and not only political rights but political duties. Defeatism begins with irresponsibility and the frustration of personality and ends in an escapism that blames external causes for internal failure.

“Finally, the integration of human personality with a great movement of history requires a doctrine which

can successfully identify individual salvation with social regeneration. Both fighters and civilians must be absolutely convinced that a great positive cause is at stake, the triumph of which can radically *improve* their lives and those of their descendants in every way. It must be a cause sufficiently universal to penetrate into the consciousness of the enemy and politically immobilize his forces."

It could not be better put. If it has been necessary to bring into the light the real meaning of Communist policy, and to refute the arguments on which it is based, that is not only because, if Communists obtained a serious measure of support, Hitler would most surely win: it is also because defeatism paralyses and divides the Left, and, by setting people on a false trail, draws away their energy from what should be their sole preoccupation. For progressives should today be thinking of one thing only: how to plan and act so that Hitler, and with him plutocracy and reaction at home, may be most surely beaten.

It is substantially true that big business and the money power are still effectively in control. The partnership, or semi-partnership, of Labour in the Government has introduced a qualification which it would be as foolish to underestimate as to overestimate: things cannot be done which might otherwise have been done, concessions have been wrung, some of the dangers (and not only the military ones) inseparable from Chamberlainism are now more remote. In other words, capitalism must, to some extent, mind its P's and Q's. Nevertheless, the central fact remains.

To suggest that such a situation can be "easily" transformed, and that we can proceed from it to the sort of thing that Snow envisages by just wanting to, would be fantastically unreal. The problem, of course, is one of power. And to ask the question "How, without creating civil war or encouraging sabotage on the Right (both of which would

give Hitler the victory), can we wrest power from the hands of those with whom it now effectively resides?" is to understand the difficulty of answering it.

But if the position of socialists who at once support the war-effort (because they are socialists) and strive for socialism here and now is a difficult one—and they never imagined it would be anything else—the position of Communists is infinitely more so. For the Communists cannot succeed unless the answer to *all* the four following questions is in the affirmative: First, will they be able to rally a decisive majority of the nation to their defeatist policy, proclaimed or camouflaged? Secondly, if so will they be able to take over the leadership of the nation? Thirdly, will they then be able to negotiate a peace of "no annexations and no indemnities" with Hitler, or, alternatively, contrive his overthrow by revolution in Germany? Fourthly, if not, will they be able, in the then existing conditions, to defend the country successfully against a German attack?

To ask these questions is not merely to understand the difficulty of answering them, but to answer them in the negative. It is impossible to believe that the Communists could do any one of these things: to believe that they could do them all is political lunacy.

And if their chance of success is far smaller than ours, so the price of their failure would be immeasurably higher. Theirs would be a failure of kind: ours, of degree. If they fail, Hitler wins: if we fail, that at least is unlikely to happen. For let us consider for a moment what may occur if the war goes through to its end with the present balance of forces in this country unchanged. In the absence of any serious support for defeatist tactics, the conquest by Hitler of this island is now improbable (which does not mean that we dare relax for a moment our efforts to prevent it). More probably, in the event we are considering, the end might be a stalemate, owing to our failure to mobilise the full resources of the

nation here and to arouse the antifascist forces on the Continent of Europe against Hitler. But this is by no means certain; the detestation of Hitlerism felt by the British people, their determination to put an end to it, and unforeseeable movements on the Continent caused by Hitler's failure to conquer us as well as by our successes over Mussolini, might suffice to give us a decisive victory. In the event of a decisive victory, reactionary forces here and in America might be strong enough to impose a peace based on a return to the "old order"; but this again is by no means certain, in view of the rapid growth of a public opinion in both countries determined to prevent the present-day equivalent of "another Versailles", and in view, too, of the almost certain attitude of President Roosevelt—to avoid being so controversial as to mention Mr. Churchill.

The worst that is likely to happen, therefore, if *we* fail—we who "support" the war while endeavouring to change the balance of forces—is either a stalemate (which would at least give a breathing space) or, preferably, a decisive British victory followed by a thoroughly bad peace. Both would be evils so great that no scrap of energy can be spared from the task of making them impossible. But if the Communists fail, there can be only one result—a Hitler victory, and the imposition of Hitler-fascism on this country and eventually, in all probability, on the world. Someone prominently associated with the People's Convention said a few months ago that the difference between a Churchill victory and a Hitler victory was merely the difference between a ninety per cent evil and a hundred per cent evil: on the contrary, the difference is infinite, for it is the difference between hopelessness and hope.

It is clear, therefore, that socialists must identify themselves to the fullest degree with the war-effort, while ceaselessly striving, individually, in their groups, and by establishing new contacts and new machinery for contact with non-socialists, to give it a socialist direction.



**EPILOGUE**  
**ON POLITICAL MORALITY**



EPILOGUE  
ON POLITICAL MORALITY

By VICTOR GOLLANZ

THE COMMUNIST POLICY that has been discussed in the preceding pages may be right or may be wrong: but it cannot be right, in the eyes of any save Communists themselves, that they should deliberately mislead people into support of them. The last sentence is not intended to be an accusation, still less an insult: it is a simple statement of fact. When the Communist Party, for instance, denies that it controls the People's Convention, it consciously and of set purpose lies: and the *Daily Worker*, as the extracts cited from it show, has been consistently full of almost every possible species of misrepresentation, distortion, suppression, contradiction, false suggestion, half truth, quarter truth, and no truth at all.

Communist lying is based on a very simple theory—which may be indicated by the two words *for what?* The basic factor in the world, runs the argument, has been since classes first appeared, is, and will be till classes disappear with the triumph of socialism, the class struggle. In this struggle the class enemy uses every available weapon to maintain its ascendancy and prevent the victory of its emerging rival. In most of the world today the two opposed classes are the capitalist class, which is in decline, and the proletariat, which is in the ascendant. Between them there is a battle to the death, a battle which will end with the triumph of the proletariat and the ushering in of a classless society, from which war, poverty, exploitation, and all the intellectual and spiritual evils that arise from them, will have vanished.

The outcome is historically determined, continues the argument: the proletariat must win. But the end may be

hastened, and much suffering avoided, if the proletariat acts as a conscious agent in bringing the new order to birth. It is therefore the highest duty of the proletariat, and of those who adopt themselves into the proletariat, to use every weapon that can bring a speedier victory. In war between nations, deceit plays a most important part: a commander feints, spreads false rumour, dresses his spies in the enemy's uniform, and employs every possible chicane that may be useful for his purpose. The class struggle is the war of wars: on its successful conclusion, at the earliest moment and with the minimum of resistance, the happiness of millions will depend. In the class struggle, therefore, *not* to lie, if lying will help to beat the class enemy—who lies himself—would be a gross betrayal. "Should one lie?" is thus the question of a philistine: it suggests absolute categories of right and wrong, and "right" and "wrong" are meaningless, except when understood as ideas formulated to serve the interests of the, for the time being, dominant class. "For *what* should one lie?"—that is how the question must be put: and the answer is "To bring into being the classless society, in which lying, among other things, will be unnecessary". The end justifies the means.

This is not the place to discuss the theory of the class struggle, which is a valuable half-truth; or, as it would be better called, the fact of the class struggle, which is a part, but a part only, of reality.<sup>1</sup> But two things may be said about

<sup>1</sup> Without an understanding of the class struggle (in the light of structural developments in society since Marx wrote, and in particular of the rise of the middle-class salariat) it is impossible to find one's way about the modern world. It is not too much to say that there is a clear dividing line between those who understand it and those who do not; the latter are like blind men fumbling about in a thick sociological fog. An understanding of the class struggle is the indispensable basis of a modern political education: no other beginning can so effectively break the ice.

But to imagine that Marx has told the whole story—and, in spite of their denials, that is what the majority of Marxists in practice do imagine—is fantastic. The supremely important question of ethics, with which, as a science or art, Marx had little concern, is touched upon in the following pages. Moreover, Marx wrote before the discovery by Freud of a vitally important aspect of reality, which had formerly been unrevealed. It is as foolish for Marxists to ignore this aspect, as it would be for "Newtonians" to ignore Ein-

this theory of lying. First, it is not in its impulse ignoble: it is not the lying of a false prospectus, or of many eminent and respected statesmen. Secondly, it carries in itself its own refutation.

*Why does a Communist wish to bring the classless society to birth? Because, among other things, lying will be unnecessary in it.* Every Communist with a theoretical grounding believes that it is part of the inevitable historical process for the proletariat to win, and that he is finding his own freedom in helping on that process; but such a theory, however firmly or even fanatically held, does not move a Dimitrov to shame a Göring from the dock, or thousands of nameless Communists to risk death and torture for distributing an illegal leaflet two inches square. They are moved to do these things not by a theory, but by love and hatred: love of freedom and equality and truth and gentleness and love, hatred of slavery and exploitation and lying and violence and hatred. When men think longingly of a classless society, they think, not negatively of a society in which there is no poverty or exploitation, but positively of a society in which, there being no poverty or exploitation but a material abundance shared by all, men can live freely together in a brotherhood of Blake's four "virtues of delight", Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love, and a fifth, Truth. That is how a modern socialist would correct (while leaving the essence untouched) the saying of Confucius "What really matters is, not dying in hunger,

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stein. But orthodox Marxists do not merely ignore modern psychology: they have a feeling for it which is half-way between hatred and a comic sort of fear. The reason is that an acceptance of it would destroy the comfortable unity and finality which the Marxist system possesses for them. It is understood that Freud is particularly anathema in the Soviet Union. Marx, and perhaps Engels even more so, would have been the first to take into account this great new discovery in their endeavour to apprehend reality.

There is one special reason why undue concentration on the class struggle is exceedingly dangerous. Though Marx and Engels, with their doctrine of the superstructure, by no means ignored, however much they may have usually underestimated, the importance of the moral factor, many Marxists are so much afraid of putting the moral factor first that they do in fact end by putting it nowhere.

but the degradation of personality." Man cannot live by bread alone; but the more fully we believe it, the more insistently we demand that he shall have bread so that he may live.

When, therefore, a Communist says that "truth" and "freedom" are meaningless, and that one must ask "truth *for what?*" or "freedom *for whom?*", he is deceiving himself. He in fact accepts truth and freedom and the other virtues as absolutes: absolutes, indeed, so absolute that he must dedicate his whole life, and sacrifice it, to the task of making a world in which they may be completely realised, because no longer circumscribed, conditioned, or merely *for* this person but not *for* that.

What Communists, and those in general with a strong moral impulse, feel with special intensity, is felt in greater or less degree by all men of the West (to speak only of them) except idiots, but including most criminals. *Why* all men of the West *know* that, for instance, cruelty, and *a fortiori* cruelty to babies, is *wrong* (not unwise or unsocial or wrong in this case or for this purpose and not for that, but just *wrong*) is irrelevant to the present argument. Whether it is that gentleness, and particularly gentleness to the helpless, is an attribute of God, and man is made in His image: or that the idea of gentleness "lies somewhere up in the sky": or that men have found that they can live more comfortably together if they are not cruel to one another: or that gentleness was invented by a ruling class in order to keep their slaves submissive: this is a question for philosophers. But whether or not the wickedness of cruelty is in fact an absolute, men of the Judæo-Hellenic heritage, of which the Christian ethic is the finest flower, are so conditioned that they live, and can only live, in the realisation of it as an absolute. If they are cruel, they must apologise for their cruelty to themselves and others—sometimes by carrying their cruelty to still greater extremes. And the same applies to truth and lying.

Even the Fascists and Nazis are no exception to the rule. When a Nazi says "Truth is what serves the Reich" or "Justice is what the Führer says", the very form of these blasphemies shows that he recognises the supremacy of Truth and Justice, and, recognising them, tries to harmonise them with his psychological aggressions. For when he says things like that he is speaking to himself as well as to the mob. If it were not that Truth and Justice were imperatives to him, he would say "Truth is nonsense: serve the Reich" or "Justice is an Old Wives' Tale: do what the Führer says". Even when he directly attacks such qualities as pity and mercy, and preaches their opposites, the very fury of the attack betrays the Trojan Horses—of pity and mercy—in his heart.

But a qualification must at once be made. Man is a creature as yet very precariously balanced between good and evil. All that he has won, in his slow progress from the state of a beast, has not so far brought him, except in a few rare cases, anywhere near the state of an angel. More: his gains during the struggle have been, not indeed counterbalanced, but to some extent diminished, by new evils: for instance, most beasts are naturally and spontaneously cruel, whereas some men are deliberately and consciously so.

In this upward struggle, it is not because, in some automatic manner, he has learned to sublimate his aggressions, to transform them from the destructive into the fruitful, that man has advanced. Rather, it is his recognition of the moral law that has *compelled* him either to restrain his aggressions or to sublimate them: either to keep his evil in check, or to turn it into good. And his recognition of the moral law is due to the environment and climate produced (in the West, to speak again only of that) by the hardly won and slowly developed Judæo-Hellenic tradition—by the teaching and practice of Socratism, with its passion for objective truth, and of Christianity, with its belief in the sacredness of human personality, and in the right to freedom, which is the corollary.

This tradition, it must be repeated, is as yet precarious: it has been nurtured with difficulty by the blood of the martyrs and by innumerable tiny thoughts and acts of unknown men and women, and could easily be lost for generations or perhaps for ever. That is why, when we say that Nazism is a menace to civilisation, we are speaking simple and literal truth: this is not the phoney slogan of hypocrites (except in the case of those, as yet few in Britain, who are themselves Nazis) but the cry of men who see, in agony and desperation, that the gains of two thousand years and more are at stake, and are determined that, whatever the immediate cost in blood and torment and treasure, they shall be preserved. For while the Nazis, being also of the Western tradition, show that they recognise the moral law, sometimes by their lip-service to it in the very shape of their sentences and sometimes by the violence of their reaction against it, there have as yet been only seven years of Nazi education. If the process were to continue: if a generation or two of Germans and conquered Europeans, to say nothing of other peoples, were to be conditioned by education and environment to *believe in* wickedness: then the morality from which this immorality is a revolt might well be altogether forgotten, and a new tradition of evil established—until slowly, painfully, and with centuries of progress sacrificed, the upward movement started once again. That is why, if Hitler were to succeed on the full scale of his ambitions, he would be, not in any vague or mystical sense but as a matter of historical fact, Antichrist.

Orthodox Marxists, so called, will of course dismiss this approach to Nazism as preposterously unscientific. For them, Nazism is simply “the final stage of monopoly capitalism” or “the monopoly capitalism of heavy industry and the armament manufacturers”. The present writer has been on record for five years as protesting against this view. That the remoter origins of Nazism are to be found in the conditions

of imperialist civilisation (in the Leninist sense) cannot for a moment be doubted: but to assume from this that Nazism is "simply monopoly capitalism" is as sensible as to argue that, because the war is being conducted between Powers which are in greater or lesser degree imperialist, then "this is an imperialist war" in the meaning which Communists give to that slogan. The important fact is that the more immediate origins of Nazism are to be found in an alliance between heavy industry and the armament manufacturers on the one hand, and Hitler and his party—all the elements he gathered round him—on the other. Hitler was moved hardly at all, and the men of his party, for the most part, very little, by economic motives: they were moved by an overwhelming hatred, by a lust for power, by a thirst for revenge, and by a loathing of all the traditional values of a world in which they felt themselves to be outcasts. If we are told that it was the war of 1914–1918, and the conditions which followed it, that made these men what they were, and that the war of 1914–1918 was itself a clash of imperialisms and the inevitable result of monopoly capitalism, we must answer: that is largely true, and a terrible warning; but it is no more relevant to the task of assessing the present character of Hitlerism than the fact that a man's grandfather cohabited with a prostitute is relevant for a doctor who is seeking to discover whether the syphilis has yet attacked his patient's brain, and what will happen when it does.

The alliance between Hitler and the capitalists suited both parties: conquest would bring new markets and increased profits to the capitalists, or so they thought, and it would cure Hitler's inferiority complex, and satisfy his craving for revenge. But the psychological urge turned out to be more power-giving than the material one: it was not the monopoly capitalists that used Hitler, but Hitler that used the monopoly capitalists. And so the Germany of 1941 is not essentially a profit-seeking Germany, but a Germany organised to

conquer the world with the object of imposing on it the "new" order of masters and slaves, of brutality and submission—in a word, of antichristian illiberalism.

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To return to the main argument: when Communists say "lying isn't 'right' or 'wrong': everything depends on *what* you lie for", this isn't in the least what they really mean: what they really mean is "Any wickedness is justifiable, if it helps to abolish capitalism."

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Without discussing in general the doctrine of ends justifying means, a few reasons may be given why lying—not a lie now and again, but the settled habit of lying, deliberately employed as an habitual weapon—cannot serve the ends of those who are striving to bring the new society to birth.

1. The secular struggle in which the world has been engaged for many centuries, and which is now reaching one of its supreme climaxes, is essentially—let us be frank about it—a moral struggle, a struggle between good and evil. This is not to deny that the desire to assuage hunger, and the other physical appetites, may be in one sense, or perhaps in every sense, primary: nor is it to prejudge the issue whether ideas of right and wrong have arisen during, from, and to serve the purposes of, the struggle of classes for economic and political power. But if so, these ideas, as they have progressively arisen, have gradually acquired a validity and compulsion, over a constantly widening area of human endeavour, superior to the validity and compulsion of the urges from which they came. The theory of the class struggle was, if not invented, then so perfected by Karl Marx that through his writings it has guided the actions of countless men and women, and been a considerable factor in producing one great Revolution. But what impelled Karl Marx to devote his life to the study that produced this theory or revealed this fact, and to the propagation of it, was a two-fold



passion—the passion for scientific truth and the passion for social righteousness. Both are moral passions. And if the answer is that the dominance of these passions itself arose out of former class struggles, that sort of eternal regress has neither interest nor relevance for the present argument.

The moral struggle which, it is suggested, is now reaching one of its great climaxes is above all a struggle about human personality. Are individual men—all men—to be free and self-directing? Are they to be able, uncircumscribed by anything save the properties of the physical universe, to realise every latent potentiality? Are they to co-operate in peace and equal brotherhood—for this is the greatest potentiality of all—to make life ever “more joyous and more free”? Or are some to be pawns and instruments to serve the alien purposes of others?

Those who believe that men cannot be free, in the sense just suggested, under capitalism—no men, neither millionaires nor paupers—will see in socialism one of the main spearheads of the attack today against the forces of evil. The work of Karl Marx has had many good, and at least one very bad, result: for though moved to do it, as his followers are moved to do theirs, by moral passion, he ended by appearing to banish from his examination of capitalism any moral considerations whatsoever. But the most important thing about capitalism is not that it is inefficient, or a necessary episode in the struggle of classes, or a higher stage of production than feudalism, or bound to destroy itself by its own internal contradictions—important though these are. The most important thing about capitalism is that it is wicked.

Just as the struggle for socialism is one of the main spearheads of the attack upon the forces of evil, so is the struggle against Hitler-fascism another. *They are, indeed, essentially the same struggle.* It is not suggested that Mr. Churchill is a socialist: it is not denied that there are fascists in Britain and America: nor that there are socialists—a great many of

them—in Germany: nor that there is a great deal of evil, in method and motive, on the British side: nor that there is a great deal of good on the German. Still less is it suggested that Britain is fighting for socialism—though she might be, if all British socialists would do their job. But, for all the high hills and deep valleys in the landscapes, the broad aspect of both is clear: Britain is fighting—partially, blindly, distractedly, and without facing the implications—to preserve the freedom of human personality, and the Nazis are fighting, consciously and deliberately, to circumscribe it. And socialists fight, always, in every country, to *extend* the freedom of human personality. Mr. Churchill, little though he may think of it like that, is striving to preserve the tradition out of which socialism arose, and the disappearance of which would render socialism impossible.

The fight for socialism and the fight against Hitler are, then, “all mixed up”: both are concerned with human personality. But that is only another way of saying that the fight today is a fight for truth. Positively, a man becomes the more free, the more completely he apprehends objective reality: negatively, he becomes the more enslaved, the more he is manipulated by those who are able to persuade him that what is false is true. The vilest of all the marks of fascism, viler perhaps even than its physical cruelty, is precisely its contempt for objective truth, its cult of lying for its own evil purposes: and the vileness consists in a lack of respect for human personality. *But if the fight is a fight about truth, how can those who are for truth fight successfully for it while simultaneously fighting against it—by habitually lying?* If the fight were about something *else*, it would be interesting to discuss whether lying could be justified as a means to a good end: but not when the fight is about *truth*.

2. Constant lying produces a steady deterioration of character, and particularly of intellectual character, in the liar. Beginning with a respect for truth—indeed, little

though they may afterwards realise it, with a very special and unusual respect for truth—communists proceed to lie on occasion for the strictly limited purpose of winning a particular move in the game of the class struggle. But with many the practice gradually becomes so habitual and so reckless that they end by regarding the whole question of truth and falsehood as irrelevant: more, they actually become unable to distinguish between the two. At this point, their usefulness ceases. For if it is necessary, without shamefacedness, to stress the moral nature of the issues that confront us, it is no less necessary to insist on

“More brain, oh Lord, more brain! Or we shall mar  
Utterly this fair garden we might win.”

That socialists may win, nothing less than the most scrupulous examination of reality will suffice: every fact must be considered by them, every situation analysed, every character assessed, in the dry light of impartial reason. Only so can they be equipped with a weapon strong enough to defeat the forces of irrationality, which is to say of immorality. But how can people be scrupulous in their search for truth, if they have lost the power to distinguish truth from falsehood?

3. Lying “doesn’t work”: sooner or later people find you out, and are lost to you. For some years men and women will remain members of the Communist Party, or co-operate closely with it for certain common objects: then something or other happens which produces too great a shock, and the link is snapped. This is not, of course, true of the whole body of members and sympathisers; there are those who remain members of the Party over a long period of years or during their whole lifetime, for their duty, as they honourably see it, is to remain soldiers in the proletarian vanguard, and this consideration takes precedence over every other. But it is certain that the “turnover”, at least within the Communist Party of Great Britain, is enormous—at times, perhaps, as

high as fifty per cent in a single year. Nor is this revolt confined, as is sometimes thought, to the "intelligentsia". At the time when it was the "line" that communists should work as "cryptos" inside the Labour Party, it was common knowledge that it was very difficult to persuade them to do so, for "it went against the grain of the British workers".

A trivial episode occurred at the recent meeting of the People's Convention, which shows the stupidity of this policy. An "unknown soldier" came onto the platform to voice the grievances of men in the service. Just an ordinary soldier, who would tell the Convention what other ordinary soldiers were thinking. He played his part to perfection. But there was not a journalist in the hall who did not immediately recognise him as one of the best known and most experienced of the younger communist leaders: and it cannot have been very long before the news got round to most of the "innocents" present. You simply can't "get away with" that sort of thing.

4. Most serious of all, the new society, when it is brought into being, will depend for its character on that of the party or group which has taken the leadership in bringing it into being, and thereafter assumes the guidance and direction of it. In the final analysis, methods of organisation and systems of government, crucially important though they are, are far less so than the *people* who administer them—who are the final reality. Invent, for instance, the most perfect machinery for securing individual freedom, and if those who control it have forgotten what freedom means they may rapidly transform it into an instrument of the vilest tyranny. It is no disparagement of the Russian Revolution, which will always remain one of the greatest events in human history, nor is it a criticism of the men who made it, for they were necessarily conditioned by the circumstances in which they had lived, to point out that much that is to be regretted in the Soviet régime during the last twenty-three years may be explained

by the violence and subterfuge which were almost inevitable characteristics of the struggle against Tsarism.

The more we reflect on the nature of the problem that confronts the modern world, the more importance does this fourth consideration assume. What "new order" do we wish to see emerging from the pain of war? What sort of future society will have made the present sacrifice of millions not merely worthwhile, for anything that defeats Nazism is worthwhile, but positively the occasion for a great step forward in civilisation?

First, it must be a society from which the scientifically inept and morally evil system of production for private profit has been eliminated.

But that is not sufficient: there is no warrant for the belief that the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, indispensable though it is as a piece of machinery, necessarily and in itself implies the creation (either immediately, or after a transitional period, short or long) of a society in which men and women may lead a good life.

Secondly, then, it must be a society in which men and women have political, cultural and intellectual freedom, as well as economic freedom: in which there is genuine political democracy: in which there is complete freedom of opinion and its expression.

It must be a society in which every citizen is at least encouraged to think for himself, and to form an independent judgment on the basis of all the facts.

And it must be a society characterised by a respect for the Christian virtues, and by a contempt for ruthlessness, pride, cruelty, arrogance, hate, revenge and the pursuit of power.

The problem, therefore, to which we have to direct our minds is the following: Economic planning in the interests of the whole community is the *sine qua non* of a decent society. It implies rigid centralised control. By what technique,

developed bit by bit after the first decisive step has been taken, and by the process of trial and error, can that control be harmonised with the widest possible freedom? Or, put in another way: how, in the scientifically planned society, can we not merely preserve but immensely increase all those gains for humanity symbolised by the names of, to mention only three, Socrates, Voltaire, and above all Christ?

As we think about this technique—the methods of representation, the checks and balances, the democratic machinery, the relationship of the central authority to the local, industrial, and professional groups and of all these to the individual—we come to see more and more clearly that technique is only half the matter, and perhaps the less important half. For no technique will solve the problem, unless the men and women of the new society, respecting human personality above everything, wish to solve it: and unless, too, this respect instinctively guides their everyday thoughts and actions. By the same token, given this respect failures in technique will not have such dire consequences.

That is why, if only we can rise to the height of our opportunity, Britain may yet, in the twentieth century, show the way to humanistic socialism as surely as, in the nineteenth, she led the world in competitive capitalism, which was then economically progressive. For despite the palaces and slums, the despair of the unemployed and the dividends of cent. per cent.: despite, no less, the Black and Tans of the twenties and Nehru in prison today: nevertheless the struggle for democratic freedom, which is the next best thing to its practice, has been more uninterruptedly pursued among us than among any other of the Western peoples. And that is also why, when the day comes, as inevitably it must, for the final stage of that other struggle which is really the same struggle—"the struggle for power", the struggle to place the ownership of the means of production in the hands of the whole people—it will be a gain beyond reckoning if we can

preserve, still without interruption, such imperfect traditions of democracy and freedom as we possess.

But if in the "new order" men will be more important than methods, the colour of the general body of citizens more decisive than any question of technique, most important of all will be the characteristics of those who aspire to lead us and give us guidance. Among these characteristics the habit of lying can have no place, for it is the antithesis of respect for others.

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It may be objected that phrases such as "consistent lying" or "the habitual use of lying as a weapon", when applied to the Communist Party, are an exaggeration. In the sense in which the terms are here used, they are not. For "lying" must be taken to include, not only "every possible species of misrepresentation, distortion, suppression, contradiction, false suggestion, half truth, quarter truth, and no truth at all", but also the deliberate blackening of an opponent by the imputation of unworthy motives, the publication of all the evil, real or imaginary, that an adversary has done without the publication of any good that may be to his credit, and generally the whole wide gamut of vilification and abuse. And, it must be repeated, this is a settled *policy*: it is held that, to beat the class enemy, every form of deceit is not merely justifiable but obligatory. No instructed communist would dream of denying that this is, not an accusation, but a plain statement of fact.

An example, which illustrates two of the points just mentioned, may be given. Someone who had co-operated with the Communist Party during the Popular Front days, but was unable to do so after the change of line to an "anti-war" position, wrote an article criticising the policy of the Communist Party of France, which, it seemed to him, had played into the hands of the French reactionaries and had so contributed to the disaster. One of his former associates wrote

an extremely strong, but reasoned and therefore unobjectionable, reply for the *Daily Worker*. There is reason to believe that before it appeared another hand, with or without the approval of its author, inserted some lines which could have had no purpose other than to destroy the original writer's credit. Among other things, it was stated that he had supported the measures taken by the Daladier Government against antifascist refugees, which was not merely untrue and not even merely the exact reverse of the truth, but was *known* to be so. When the matter was brought to the attention of the author of the reply, over whose signature the libels had appeared, he wrote a letter to the *Daily Worker* pointing out that, within his own personal knowledge, the accusation was, to understate the case, devoid of substance. In spite of pressure, the *Daily Worker* refused to publish this withdrawal.

It may be further objected "Why pick out *communists* for this attack? Doesn't every political party try to 'down' its opponents by the use of all the weapons available for the purpose? In particular, doesn't the capitalist class, through its press and other instruments of propaganda, consistently lie, more subtly perhaps but therefore all the more dangerously, and with the far greater resources at its command—with the sole object of keeping the working class in subjection?"

There are several answers. First, to take the press alone, it is untrue that the "bourgeois" press is in general anything like as bad as the communist press in respect of the matter under discussion. The presentation of events in the "bourgeois" press ranges from the perfect scrupulousness, accuracy and fairness, nearly always in intention and usually in fact, of such papers as the *News Chronicle*, the *New Statesman* and the *Manchester Guardian*, to a mendacity in certain yellow journals of the Right which is comparable to that of the *Daily Worker*. But even in the worst cases certain *rules*, so to say, derived from our long tradition of trial by



jury and free speech, are still preserved. It is questionable whether *any* paper other than the *Daily Worker* would refuse, when challenged to do so, to publish a letter correcting what has been shown to be a definite lie.

Secondly, distorters, other than communist (and *a fortiori* fascist) ones, do not consciously distort as a result of theory, or as a matter of duty and settled policy. Being mean and brutish, they just *distort*: or, being ignorant, they don't know they are distorting: or wanting to distort, and being hypocrites, they persuade themselves that they are not distorting. Of these three categories, the hypocrites are in a majority.

Now hypocrisy is not, as is commonly supposed, more deplorable than repudiation of the moral law: it is much less deplorable. A perfect example of hypocrisy was the recent advertisement about India put out by the Ministry of Information. Underneath the romantic picture of a turbaned warrior, a carefully written and beautifully printed text suggested that the Indian people was freely behind us in the war effort—at the very moment when the Legislative Assembly, itself a “packed” body, had just rejected the Supplementary Finance Bill in order to show that it wasn't. Which is worse—this nauseating attitude of certain ruling elements here in Britain towards the coloured peoples, or Hitler's? The answer must be that Hitler's is infinitely worse, the adverb being used in its exact sense. For the lip-service which the British play to freedom shows that they still *accept* it, they still *believe* in it—and that is already something: but Hitler believes, with a passionate fanaticism, that coloured men are a species of ape, whose only purpose is to serve the German *Herrenvolk*. He has *rejected* freedom. With the British, there is hope for India: with Hitler none. No less important, there is hope for the British hypocrites themselves, but none for Hitler. He has deliberately and finally cut himself off from the progressive tradition of humanity.

But to the communist, hypocrisy is the more deplorable. The present writer put the following question to a leading communist theoretician in the spring of 1940: "Apart from your Leninist duty, as you wrongly see it, to concentrate all your attack on 'your own' Government, which do you *really* dislike most—the British ruling class or the Nazis?" The answer came immediately: "I detest the British ruling class far more. They are hypocrites, and the Nazis are gangsters; and you can do business with gangsters."

Finally, if communists are specially picked out for criticism on the score of lying, it is because they *are* communists—people who have dedicated their lives to the service of socialism. Antisocialists are working, whether "subjectively" or "objectively", to preserve an immoral order: and while it is not for a moment denied that some of them are men of the highest honour both in their methods and in the motive of their antisocialism, in general their ends will colour their means. But socialists are working to produce a moral order: it is only in respect of them, therefore, that the argument of these pages is relevant.

Nothing here written must be taken to imply that the general picture of reality that emerges, for the politically educated, from a reading of the *Daily Mail*, or even of the *Manchester Guardian*, over a period of years, is truer than that obtained by a similar study of the *Daily Worker*. The reverse is the case: for the *Daily Worker* has what is the most important, though by no means the only, clue that can guide men through the labyrinth of the modern world—namely an understanding, albeit too inelastic and doctrinaire, of the nature and development of modern capitalism—and the others lack it. But that makes it not the less but the more necessary to protest against methods that cloud reality in the very act of disclosing it.

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One particular kind of communist lying must be men-

tioned—the lying of a communist to himself. This arises from the special character of “party discipline”.

It is clear that no party can do its work effectively without a strong measure of discipline. It must work as an army. If it is proceeding to the attack, and the tanks are about to advance, it cannot allow some of its members to remove the petrol. Nor is it relevant to the present purpose (but of course highly relevant in other regards) whether its decisions are arrived at democratically, pseudo-democratically, which is the most usual, or autocratically. For even in the most democratic body, if it is alive at all, there must always be a majority and a minority, however small: there must always be some, that is to say, who consider that a particular decision is anything from an unimportant mistake to a major catastrophe.

But in most parties a common-sense freedom is still left to the individual dissentient. He is never *compelled*, for instance, positively to argue in favour of a cause in which he disbelieves: he is often allowed to register his dissent, on occasion after occasion subsequent to the decision: he may be permitted, if not to vote in the “wrong” lobby, then at least to abstain from voting at all. There may be occasions, indeed, when party tactics necessitate his silence; if so, and if his silence would, in all the circumstances, appear to commit him to a belief in the majority decision, then he must consider, in the light of his conscience, whether he must resign from the party, or whether, in view of every relevant fact, it is still his duty to the cause he serves to remain a member of it.

*But in no party save one (for one may perhaps exclude fascists from the scope of decent controversy) is he compelled himself to believe in something in which, up to a particular moment, he has totally disbelieved. That is precisely what, in practice if not in theory, he is compelled to do in the Communist Party; and, whatever may be the case on the first or second occasion, a communist of reasonably long standing finds no difficulty in doing it.*

This peculiar characteristic of Communist Party discipline arises out of the Leninist conception of the Communist Party as the vanguard, the shock troops, of the proletariat in the class struggle. This is no ordinary struggle, says Lenin: it is a long-drawn-out battle against a cruel and relentless foe, equipped with immense resources and prepared to stick at nothing: and the prize of a proletarian victory is nothing less than the salvation of the whole world. In such a fight, nothing but the strictest discipline, the most fanatical enthusiasm, can bring success. Private life, individual scruples, personal hopes and fears, all these must be swallowed up in one supreme duty—self-dedication to the cause of the working class, which is historically the cause of progress.

But it is in fact *impossible* to fight with single-minded fanaticism, not merely for the broad general purpose but for each immediate objective, unless you “believe in” that objective. To take a recent instance. For the first three or four weeks of the war, communists were bound, by decision of the Party, to subordinate everything in their lives to one sole purpose—that of seeing that the war against Hitler was waged with the utmost determination, a determination far greater than was being shown by the Government of the day. Thereafter, they were bound, by decision of the Party, to subordinate everything to another sole purpose—that of immediately stopping the war against Hitler. How could they be effective on either occasion unless they really *believed*, first that the war was right and then that the war was wrong? But they *had* to be effective: otherwise, they would have been bad communists—which would have been the final betrayal.

Of course, it is not quite as simple as that. In the days immediately following September 3rd a certain amount of “anti-war” feeling began to spring up, so far as one can gather, among members of the Communist Party. Some of it was due to the difficulty, in practice, of conducting the “war

on two fronts": men in the factories and workshops, in particular, found it almost impossible to attack the Government with sufficient fervour unless at the same time they attacked "the war". Some of it was based on ideological considerations, and particularly on an intelligent anticipation of the coming attitude of the Soviet Union. But all that is beside the point. Unless a decision had been made to demand peace, those who had not "believed in" the war would rapidly have come to believe in it: when the decision was made, those who had "believed in" it believed in it no longer. And (though this is not strictly relevant) the decision was made, not as a result of democratic discussion and persuasion, but by instruction from Moscow.

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If the reader will forgive a digression, there is no sillier little falsehood than that Moscow does not control at any rate the major decisions of the individual Communist Parties (with the possible exception, during certain periods, of the Communist Party of China). The argument that the Comintern is distinct from the Soviet State: that on the Comintern Soviet members are in a minority: and that decisions are democratically taken at Comintern Congresses; could deceive no one but a political babe. The fact is that both the Soviet State and the Comintern are effectively controlled by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (whether any body or anybody controls that, and if so what or who, is a matter of dispute): and there has been no meeting of the Comintern since the Seventh Congress of 1935, which adopted the Popular Front policy of "standing up to Hitler" and of drawing a sharp distinction between the "peace-loving democracies" and the Nazis.

But there appears to be more direct evidence, of a cast-iron kind, that the decision in question was made in Moscow. No court of law could fail to accept it: if I am wrong, Mr. Pritt will correct me. Here it is.

As everyone is aware, the basis of Communist discipline is two-fold. First, until a decision has been taken it is not merely the right but the duty of every member of the organ taking the decision to speak and vote in complete freedom; secondly, once the decision has been taken it is the duty of everyone, however he may have spoken and voted, to obey it. Now towards the end of September a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain—the highest organ of the British Party—was summoned to consider whether or not the “line” should be changed from “pro-war” to “anti-war”. Harry Pollitt and J. R. Campbell voted “pro-war”: all the others, so far as one is aware, “anti-war”. Shortly afterwards, both of them published letters in the *Daily Worker* not only accepting the “anti-war” line, but *apologising for their infringement of party discipline*. But it was not suggested that they had spoken in support of the war *after* the decision had been taken: the conclusion, therefore, seems inescapable that an organ higher than the Central Committee of the C.P.G.B. had instructed it to take an anti-war decision. The only higher organ is the Comintern; and, in the absence of any meeting of the Comintern, that can only mean Moscow.<sup>1</sup>

To state the fact that Communists everywhere are, in the final analysis, controlled by Moscow is not to criticise either Moscow or the theory on which that control is based; many sound arguments may be advanced in support of it. The present writer may, however, perhaps be allowed to say that he felt before 1935, and has felt again since the summer of 1938, that the formation of the Comintern has turned out to be a disaster. When Lenin founded it (if communist

<sup>1</sup> Theoretically, the decision could no doubt have been taken by the Praesidium of the C.I., which administers the affairs of the C.I. between Congresses, and carries out the decisions of the latter. But if in fact the Praesidium met to reverse the policy agreed upon at the 1935 Congress—for, whatever the acrobatic arguments to the contrary, a plain reversal it was—the meeting, in war conditions, could have been attended only by members of the Praesidium resident in Moscow.

readers will forgive that formulation) he had no idea of "building socialism in a single country": he looked forward to the early occurrence of world revolution, of which the Comintern was to be the instrument. The world revolution did not occur: socialism was built, correctly in the writer's opinion, in a single country. But the Comintern "hung on". The result has inevitably been, at worst a clash between, at best a desperate attempt to harmonise, the growing interests of the Sovereign Soviet Socialist State (necessarily doing business, in a predominantly capitalist world, with Sovereign Capitalist States) and the interests of the international socialist movement. The result has been, too, that in such a country as Britain many of the most enthusiastic socialists have been drawn out of the main stream of the indigenous working-class movement, into which they could have infused new vitality, and have formed themselves into a body which cannot in the long run lead either the workers or the nation, for its colour is alien to the national characteristics and the national history.

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To return: a communist ends by automatically *believing* in the "party line": he does not act in accordance with it in spite of disbelief, nor does he persuade himself that he believes in it—he just *believes* in it. The process by which this result is achieved is perfectly familiar to anyone who has watched the mind of a young communist at work over the period of a year or so. At first he cannot honestly accept, say, some "change of line". But then two things happen. First, he finds his party work ineffective: he cannot put the right enthusiasm into it, and this—it is no exaggeration, nor is it anything but an expression of respect—destroys the whole meaning of his life, which he has dedicated to the service of the Party. Secondly, the Communist Party is a very closely knit fellowship: many of its members never meet, week after week, anyone except other members. In the society of his

friends, a mental dissentient feels unhappy: he thinks of himself as not quite "sound": he may even fear that some specially fanatical or specially loyal member may discover his "dangerous thoughts" and denounce him to authority as, worst of all, a "Trotskyite". And so, for both reasons, he begins, not to examine the matter objectively in the light of all the facts available to him, but to summon arguments which will persuade him that the party line is right; and he succeeds in persuading himself, because he wants to do so. In other words, he acts more or less as other men and women act on occasion, except those of special mental integrity—but always, and very much more so.

After this process has been repeated a few times, the self-persuasion becomes easier; until eventually the intermediate links are cut out, and, in extreme cases, he really believes one moment the opposite of what he believed the moment before.

Many examples will be within the recollection of all who have given the matter any attention. Just before the German-Soviet Pact, most communists believed that any such thing was a sheer impossibility, and that suggestions to the contrary were anti-Soviet propaganda and "provocation" of the vilest kind. Shortly after, those same communists believed that it was a salutary, necessary, and even obvious measure of socialist statecraft. When the German text of the Pact was announced, influential communists said, with perfect confidence and in obvious sincerity, that the German text was certainly incomplete and that, when the Moscow text came to be published, it would be found to contain an "escape" clause, annulling the Pact in the event of aggression by either signatory against a third Power: it would thus prevent an attack by Germany on Poland, and would save the peace. A day or two later, when the Moscow text was published and found to be identical with the German, those same communists said, with equal confidence and in equal sincerity—something else, which has passed out of recol-



lection. Almost the very day, if not the very day, before Poland was invaded (or call it what you will) by the Soviet Union, the *Daily Worker*, with unmistakable honesty, protested against slanders in the capitalist press to the effect that the Soviet Union was about to invade Poland, thereby showing its belief that such an invasion would be indefensible; shortly afterwards, it applauded the invasion as liberating Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine.

A clear distinction must be drawn between such belief in one thing at one moment and another at the next, and lying to mislead. When the Communist Party says that it does not control the People's Convention, it is endeavouring to deceive the public: when members of the Communist Party called for peace in October 1939, having just previously called for war, they were for the most part not even endeavouring to deceive themselves. They believed in what they said. Nor are we here dealing with any species of hypocrisy: we are dealing with something that a Greek philosopher described, not by way of abuse but for scientific accuracy, as "the lie in the soul", and to which a Christian referred when he said "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness". And the vital thing to note is that those in whom such mental processes have become habitual are useless in a struggle which should above all be their struggle, and would be dangerous as leaders of the new society which they desire so urgently to create.

It is customary to reply by pouring scorn on any concern for individual integrity or "souls". Bourgeois considerations of that kind, it is said, are of no importance; what is important is that people should throw themselves into the stream of the mass movement. Such a conception, however, has no similarity with the genuine socialist or Marxist conception; on the contrary, it has a close similarity with the fascist. For socialists, the fullest development of the individual personality, which is possible only in the fellowship of a

co-operative society, is everything; for fascists, individual personality is a myth, or, as Hitler has put it, a "disaster". And the fascist-minded can neither make nor lead a socialist State.

One other result follows from the characteristics of communist mentality that have been discussed. They make mental communication between non-communists and communists of the extreme type impossible. Shortly after the outbreak of the Russo-Finnish war the present writer was lunching with a member of the Communist Party. Anxious to form a fair judgment, he attempted to thrash the matter out with his friend. But after a few minutes he said "Let us discuss something else. There is an impregnable barrier between us; I cannot get through to you, and you cannot get through to me. I am trying to discover the truth; you are producing arguments to support a case. We can get no further."

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All that has been written about communist lying applies no less to communist hatred. It was said on an earlier page that men and women are moved to become communists—it is certainly true of the overwhelming majority—not by a belief in historical or dialectical materialism, which normally comes later, but by love and hatred: love of good things, including love, and hatred of evil things, including hatred. Whether the love and hatred are independent moral imperatives: or whether we are conditioned to experience them by the traditions of our civilisation: or whether they are extensions of the sexual impulse or expressions or rationalisations of aggression; that again must be left to philosophers, helped this time by physicists and psychologists. All that can be said with reasonable certainty is that all hatred, even the moral hatred of wickedness, has in it an element of aggression; and there are some communists, just as there are some non-communists, who are exceptionally violent and aggressive men—

that and little else—with a thirst for power and revenge that borders on criminality or madness. Such people are only by accident communists; they might just as well have been fascists.

These exceptions are not important; but of the majority of communists it must be said that the hatred tends to encroach on the love, to transfer itself from things and institutions and systems to persons, and to become at last a duty and a cult. As Lucien Laurat has recently shown in his brilliant book *Le Marxisme en Faillite ?*, such a development is totally unmarxist; for Marx, by showing capitalism to be an inevitable stage in historical development, at least freed men from the necessity of hating capitalists,<sup>1</sup> even if at the same time one of the results of his work has unfortunately been to remove capitalism itself from the category of immoralities. In that respect, as in many others, the *Daily Worker* is an unmarxist paper; for its orgy of hatred against individuals is as deliberate and as sickening as its mendacity.

If hatred of persons becomes so habitual as eventually to be the dominant note in a man's character, it makes him ineffective in the modern struggle, which is a struggle against hatred; and it makes him useless, too, as a leader of the new society, which is to be based on the antithesis of hatred, and which will take its colour from those who lead it. Here again—and again it is not a criticism, for previous history had its inevitable result—much that has happened in the Soviet Union is a warning.

<sup>1</sup> Marx wrote in the preface of *Capital*:

“To prevent possible misunderstanding, a word. I paint the capitalist and the landlord in no sense *couleur de rose*. But here individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class relations and class interests. My standpoint, from which the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them.”

Before concluding this chapter, and with it the book, a final point must be made. It may be asked "Why write so critically in times such as these? Would it not have been better to write constructively? You might have written of the need to establish social justice, equality and brotherhood in Britain now, and so, in this moral struggle of which you speak, to turn a negative fight, for the prevention of more evil, into a positive one, for the winning of more good. You might have written of the need to free India: to counter the propaganda which, in certain quarters, is endeavouring to stir up hatred against the German people: to make what has been called a psychological offensive on the Continent of Europe, and thus to rally the progressive forces of the world and end the war by the overthrow of fascism everywhere. You have done none of these things, or rather you have done them, yes, but only in a few chapters at the end: you have preferred to devote the greater part of the book to an attack on people who, after all, are also of the left.

"Moreover, those whom you are attacking are an insignificant minority, without power or influence, for whose character and capacity you appear to feel little respect. Isn't it all, then, a lot of pother about nothing?"

It must be said at once that if the deduction is drawn, either from this epilogue or from the book itself, in both of which there is no mincing of words, that the writer has no respect for communists, the deduction is a wholly erroneous one. The contrary is the case; and that is precisely why no words are minced. The book is mainly devoted to an explanation and refutation of what is, in the opinion of the contributors, a ruinous policy, and this epilogue considers certain mental and spiritual characteristics which, it is suggested, tend to develop in communists, to impair their effectiveness, and to make any co-operation of non-communists with them increasingly difficult. But that does not for a moment mean that communists are considered to be either

disreputable or of no account. They lie unashamedly to achieve their ends: they allow themselves to be debased by a hatred of persons: but for self-sacrifice, contempt for worldly goods, enthusiasm, hard work, purity of ultimate motive, determination to alleviate suffering, faith and fortitude, and, when the last test comes, an unquestioning willingness to accept the martyrdom of imprisonment and torture and finally death, they are, with some inevitable exceptions, equalled by few and surpassed by none. And there are even those among them who, possessing all these qualities, are also able, in spite of all temptations, to preserve a high measure of intellectual integrity and to hate persons less than most men. Such communists shine like good deeds in a naughty world. "Chuh Teh" says Major Carlson of the great Chinese communist in his recent book *Twin Stars of China* "has the kindness of a Robert E. Lee, the tenacity of a Grant, and the humility of a Lincoln"; and it is not difficult to call to mind communist men and women here in Britain, whose names will never be known to any except their friends, of whom hardly less might be said.

It is, therefore, a special sense of the importance of communists, and of the potential value of communist material, that has prompted the writing of these pages. And the intention has been a wholly constructive one; for, as was said in Chapter XI, the false trail of defeatism draws off people of particular energy, and those whom they inspire, from what should be for socialists the task of tasks today—to contrive the simultaneous defeat of *all* the enemies of the working class and human progress, at home and abroad, instead of, as in France, facilitating a victorious alliance between the foreign and domestic reactionaries.

There is also a personal consideration. If anyone has co-operated with others when he thought their policy to be right, he cannot be silent when they have changed it for one which, in perhaps the most fateful moment of

the world's history, he believes to be disastrous. He must speak out unmistakably; and the present writer, having done so in this book, hopes that he has said his last word on the subject, and can now turn to a more agreeable task.

Another personal word will not be out of place. It may be said: "You are being damned self-righteous: don't *you* lie on occasion, and sometimes indulge in a more subtle form of lying by arranging things in your mind in such a way that the result comes out as you want it to?" I have no doubt I frequently do: but if I catch myself out I try to be ashamed of it and I do not adopt it as a settled policy. It may also be objected: "If what you say about communist mentality is true, you must have been aware of it when, during the Popular Front period, you co-operated so closely with the Communist Party. Feeling as you do, and no doubt did, why were you silent *then*?" There are several answers. First, one does not publicly criticise those with whom one is working. Secondly, in any form of co-operation there must be give and take. Thirdly, it is only in association with people that one gets to know their characteristics, and the knowledge is cumulative. Fourthly, unless one is of more than usual integrity one excuses means of which one disapproves more easily if one agrees with the end than if one doesn't, wrong though that is. Fifthly, co-operation with a movement possessing these characteristics tends to develop similar characteristics in oneself. Sixthly (and by the same token) the happiness of co-operating in a common object of crucial importance with people who possess the *other* characteristics mentioned above carries one along, and makes one stifle scruples. Seventhly, it was the growth of fascism to a point at which it threatened to dominate the world that made me feel that there could be no compromise in these matters of lying and hatred, for lying and hatred are of the essence of fascism. That is why by the early summer of 1938 I was already finding

my co-operation with the Communist Party, which had begun two years earlier, increasingly difficult.

In other words, on some counts but not on all *peccavi*.

A good illustration of the fourth and fifth points just mentioned is afforded by my attitude, during the Popular Front campaign, to the Soviet Union. The object of the campaign, and the world-historical importance it assumed in our minds, must be remembered. Its primary object was to produce a Government which would "stand up to Hitler" and, for this purpose, enter into close relations with the Soviet Union: our belief being that in this way Hitler would be checked, and fascism therefore overthrown—for Hitlerism could only stabilise itself by expanding—without the disaster of war. No one can now ever know whether success was possible: whether we could have got the Government we desired, and whether, if we had got it, war would have been averted without, by appeasement, giving the victory to Hitler. I am myself convinced that the answer to both questions is "yes": and not only that we might have succeeded, but that we nearly did succeed.

It is possible to go further, and to say that if the Popular Front campaign did not prevent war, as it aimed to do and might have done, it did perhaps play a considerable part in preventing something even worse than war, namely the "bloodless" nazification of the world. For war was in the end made inevitable by two things: first, by Mr. Chamberlain's pledge to Poland; secondly, and in view of that pledge, by the German-Soviet pact. The pledge was, in the absence of any prior arrangement with the Soviet Union, or even of a determination to come to a subsequent arrangement, a piece of reckless folly: but, if he was at last to offer any resistance to Hitler at all, it was the best Mr. Chamberlain could do, for he was caught in the meshes of his previous policy and of the hatred of Russia which still consumed him. If he had not given the pledge there might indeed, there almost certainly

would, have been no war: there would have been more and more appeasement, and fascism would have conquered without a struggle. If we can now beat Hitler, war—and I say it as one who in almost any other war would have been a pacifist—will turn out to have been by far the lesser evil. So the unsupported pledge, in itself the nemesis of Mr. Chamberlain's past, may yet prove to have been, in all the circumstances, the turning-point to salvation. And that Mr. Chamberlain gave it (in that hurried, off-hand way) because public opinion would stand "appeasement" no longer, there cannot be the smallest doubt. This public opinion was largely created by the Popular Front campaign.

However that may be, friendship with the Soviet Union was the essential object of the campaign: which, because that was its object, involved close co-operation between communist and non-communist opponents of fascism and appeasement.

Both elements in the situation—the fact that one was working with communists and the fact that one was working for friendship with the Soviet Union—exercised a compelling influence. To create a public opinion friendly to the Soviet Union was essential to success; and success, for those who daily realised that war would mean the agony of millions and fascism the end of all decent living, was a prize beyond any reckoning. This public opinion had to be created in face of a constant stream of propaganda that attacked the bad things in Russia without mentioning the good, that dressed up the good so as to make them look bad, and that was inspired by people who hated her not because they thought her socialism to be imperfect or illiberal or inhumane, or even to have become a tyranny, but quite simply because she was, in whatever degree, actually or potentially socialist. And so there was a temptation, and the temptation grew, to praise the good things without mentioning the bad, to dress up the bad so as to make it look good, and, because she



was in some manner socialist, to ignore the illiberalism and the inhumanity.

This tendency was increased by the co-operation with communists; first because any fundamental criticism of Russia would have snapped the links immediately—to express the smallest doubts was to stamp one as “an enemy of the Soviet Union”—and secondly because, when the end seemed the only thing in life worth working for, one began to be infected oneself by their doctrine that “the means justify the end”.

Looking back, I think I erred more as a publisher than as a writer or speaker, and more by omission than commission. I accepted manuscripts about Russia, good or not so good, because they were “orthodox”; I rejected others, by bona fide socialists and honest men, because they were not. It was in the matter of the Trials that the inner conflict was greatest. I well remember a Christmas in Paris when I read the thousand-page verbatim report of one of them: it was like living in some *urwelt* of intellectual terror, where men had lost, or had never had, the pride of free and independent humanity.<sup>1</sup> But every Tycoon in Britain was using that trial to stir up hatred of Russia, because, twenty-three years ago, she had abolished the exploitation of man by money. So I remembered Bolshevo, and the Red Corner in the Soviet ship, and the Prophylacterium, and the singing of the children when we went, in Moscow, to the Palace of Pioneers; and I published only books that justified the trials, and sent the socialist criticisms of them elsewhere.

I am glad to remember that, when directly challenged by questioners at public meetings, I always spoke my mind, giving the pros and cons as honestly as I could; but I did not strive officiously to speak it, preferring to avoid awkward topics when the choice rested with me alone.

<sup>1</sup> I am not of course here discussing whether some or all of the accused had plotted against the régime. I think they had.

I am as sure as a man can be—I was sure at the time in my heart—that all this was wrong: wrong in the harm it did to people from whom one was keeping some part of the truth as one saw it; wrong in the harm it did to oneself (which was important, not because it was oneself, but because oneself was part of humanity); wrong in the harm it did to Russia, because that country, in which there is so much greatness and still more hope, can only be injured by a sycophancy that treats her as a spoilt child instead of as an adult with errors and crimes as grievous as our own; and wrong above all in the harm it did to the sum total of truth and honest thinking, by an increase of which we can alone find the way forward.

\* \* \* \* \*

As for self-righteousness, no one but a fool forgets, even in the act of criticism, that with another social background and environment or a very small difference in the composition of his grey matter, or even with a certain shifting of emphasis, he might be defending no less emphatically or honestly the very position he is engaging in criticising. He believes that he is right, but knows that he may be wrong. That is why the preservation of freedom of opinion and its expression is of such supreme importance. Unfortunately, communists themselves never have this mental reservation. Their conviction that they are right is absolute: this is the source of a fanaticism which is at once their greatest strength and their greatest weakness.

After the main body of the book has been sent to press, and just as this final chapter is being finished, it is announced that the *Daily Worker* has been suppressed.

That the *Daily Worker* and the Communist Party should themselves be indignant that action has been taken, or that it has been taken under Regulation 2D rather than by trial, appears to be hypocritical: for they themselves, in so far as

circumstances permit, habitually deny free speech, and what corresponds in political life to a fair trial, to their opponents. Moreover, there have been issues of the paper so reckless in their violence that they have seemed positively to be courting suppression; and it has even been suspected that this has been the Party's aim, on the calculation that it could in the long run do its work more effectively if driven underground. There is no foundation for such a suspicion; these issues are to be explained by the Party's belief that it could "get away with" them.

But while indignation from communists *as* communists is not very convincing, criticism from the general public, and particularly from liberals and socialists, is another matter. For on any showing it is lamentable that a situation should have been allowed to arise in which it became necessary, if it did become necessary, that the *Daily Worker* should cease publication. This is essentially a war for free speech and free opinion, as opposed to the intellectual totalitarianism of Nazidom; and while it cannot possibly be held that a formal respect for free speech in all circumstances can be allowed, in our desperate situation, to facilitate a defeat which would mean the final extinction of free speech—communists have themselves been foremost in pointing out how the "weakness" and "liberalism" of the Weimar Republic left fascism unchecked until it was too late to take effective action—it would have been a magnificent achievement if we could have got through the war without even appearing to suppress any body of opinion, save that of the fascists themselves. Mr. Morrison has made it clear that the *Daily Worker* was suppressed, not because of its anti-war views or its opposition to the Government (both of which it shares with, for instance, the *New Leader*) but because it has consistently fomented opposition to the war effort, and has therefore become militarily dangerous. There are no grounds for questioning the honesty of this statement. But in addition to fomenting

opposition to the war effort the *Daily Worker* has also been an organ of opinion, and of one of the most important varieties of opinion in the modern world; and you cannot suppress what is militarily dangerous without suppressing the opinion also. It must be repeated, therefore, that it would have been better if such a situation had not been allowed to arise.

Three things should have been done, as some of us have urged for many months. First, there should have been a careful explanation, in the factories and elsewhere, of the real meaning of communist policy since the change of line. Properly understood, this policy would have obtained no support whatever; and it was precisely in the belief that explanation was better than suppression, and that explanation would make suppression unnecessary, that this book was planned. Secondly, and more important, there should have been a great propaganda campaign, of which there is as yet hardly a sign, explaining, with factual detail drawn from Germany and the conquered territories, what precisely would happen to the workers in the event of a Nazi victory; and this should have been conducted by men who can speak in a working-class accent, and understand the actualities of working-class life. Thirdly, and most important of all, legitimate grievances should have been remedied and at least the most glaring and intolerable inequalities removed, both for the sake of decency and victory, and to cut the ground away from the communist campaign.

These things were not done; and so a point was reached at which, in Mr. Morrison's opinion, the *Daily Worker* had become a potential danger to morale, and the paper was suppressed. This is not the place to discuss the rights or wrongs of the suppression (that issue having been allowed to arise) or of the method adopted; but looking at the matter from another angle, that of communist strategy, we can see British Communists repeating in another form, here in

Britain, the mistakes of their French comrades. They have played their cards in such a way as to make suppression inevitable; they have cut themselves off from the nation, and have by their own act renounced the possibility of influencing the progress of events. Inevitable though this may have been as a result of the Soviet complication, considered in itself it is the very antithesis of Leninism.

And yet, when everything has been said, I do not wish to end this book on a note of criticism. I think I speak for the contributors as well as for myself when I say that, in spite of all its errors and of what must frankly be described as worse than errors; in spite, too, of the fact that communist policy since October 1939, if successful, could bring nothing but slavery and ruin to the people; no socialist will ever forget, in this moment of the temporary disappearance of the *Daily Worker*, that the men responsible for it have acted throughout, according to their lights and as they saw their duty, in the service of the greatest of all causes: the emancipation of the working class, and, through it, of humanity.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

### THE ULBRIGHT ARTICLE

[*Note*:—The portions omitted from the version printed in *World News and Views* of February 17th, 1940 are inserted in square brackets.]

**T**HE *NEUE VORWAERTS*, organ of the former Central Committee of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany, has published an article by Dr. Hilferding, entitled the "*Purpose of the War*", in which the author comes to the conclusion that *one must unreservedly wish to see the victory of France and England.*

Hilferding maintains that the war is being waged by the Governments of England and France for the ideals of liberty and not for capitalist class interests. The bourgeois press of Britain and France expresses itself somewhat more precisely regarding the purpose of the war. The press which represents the views of the City of London has in the last few weeks openly declared that by means of the war "freedom" is to be gained to carve up Germany and use it as a war-instrument against the Soviet Union. By unreservedly desiring the victory of Britain and France, Hilferding also endorses this war aim. This war policy of the Social-Democratic leaders is not only directed against the interests of the German people, but is contrary to the will of millions of working men and women in Britain and France. How many declarations and demonstrations of workers against the imperialist war have been reported in

the last few months? M. Blum complains that many workers refuse to read his paper any more.

The special task of the *Neue Vorwaerts* now obviously consists in concealing the war aims of British imperialism with a false picture of alleged "freedom and democracy". On the other hand, the German workers rightly ask, would it not be more in place if the British and French Governments, in order to prove that their words are seriously meant, gave complete freedom to the peoples of India, Africa and Egypt? [When the middle-class papers declare in one article that England is fighting for freedom, and report in another article in the same paper the arrest of fighters for freedom, the muzzling of the workers' press, the establishment of concentration camps and special laws against the workers, then the German workers have the proof before their eyes that the ruling class in England is carrying on the war against the working class, and that, if Germany were conquered, the German working class would be treated in the same way. The German workers know the big business men of England and the two hundred families of France, and are aware what an English victory would mean to them.] The revolutionary workers and progressive forces in Germany who, at the cost of great sacrifices, are fighting against the terror and against reaction, do not wish to exchange the present régime for a régime of national and social oppression by British imperialism and German big capitalists who are subservient to Britain, but are fighting against all enslavement of the working people, for a Germany in which the working people really rule.

When Hilferding says further, "the war is not a war resulting from antagonistic capitalist interests", and asserts that "*the capitalist class is not responsible for the war*", then he is simply flying in the face of such facts as the struggle between the capitalist classes of the various countries for new spheres of interests, for the conversion of the smaller States into

dependent States, for securing the imperialist oppression of colonial peoples, India, for example, as well as the recent enslavement of peoples, Czechoslovakia, for example. [In his speech on the 22nd anniversary of the October Revolution, Molotov described in detail how the democratic countries, "in the last few years have more and more sought a way out of the *status quo* in risky foreign policy, in the robbery and plundering of foreign territories and colonies, in the re-division of the world through war. Even the richest countries, and those which have, so to speak, become fat by hoarding riches, can find in their internal strength no easing of the present situation—they can discover no way of satisfying the people."]

Herr Hilferding is so dominated by the desire to protect capitalism, that he expressly stresses not only that the British and French capitalist class are not responsible for the war, but also that the German capitalists are not responsible for the war. Hilferding is afraid that in the course of the war the masses of the people who want peace will not only turn against the war-makers in the State apparatus, but also against those who are mainly interested in the war, namely, the big capitalists and the big landowners.

It is not sufficient, however, to recognise the capitalist causes of the war, it is necessary to be clear regarding the special conditions of the present war and the grouping of forces in it. Hilferding maintains that since 1933 Britain and France continually made concessions to Germany in order to maintain peace, even at the price of a real reduction of their power. Nobody will deny that for years the Chamberlain Government rendered the Hitler régime economic and foreign-political aid. But Chamberlain pursued this policy not in the interests of peace, but on the contrary, in order to make use of German National-Socialism so as to crush the revolutionary forces in Europe and prevent the bringing together of the democratic forces in a fighting People's



Front. The so-called "Non-Intervention" policy, for example, was nothing else but active support of the reactionary forces in Spain.

It is true that by annexing Austria and Czechoslovakia German imperialism proved its aggressiveness. But this only goes to prove that the ruling circles in England promoted the Hitler régime with the desire to use National-Socialism [which dreadfully terrorises the German workers] as gendarme against all progressive forces and against the Land of Socialism.

If, as Hilferding says, the British and French Governments were at that time concerned about the maintenance of peace, then they could very well have achieved this by concluding a Pact with the Soviet Union. British big business, however, sought a way out of the difficulties of decaying capitalism in war. It sought to make use of every possibility in order to incite the German people and the people of the Soviet Union to war against each other. By the Munich Pact it handed over Czechoslovakia to Germany in the expectation that the German ruling circles would be prepared to wage war against the Soviet Union. The policy of the British Government towards Poland had the same aim.

On the other hand, among the working people of Germany there was a growing desire to maintain peace. After the annexation of Czechoslovakia, discontent on account of the oppression of foreign nations by Germany increased among many German working people, who said that this policy of conquest was directed against the interests of the German people themselves.

In view of the changes in the situation in Europe [this was the problem that faced the rulers of Germany: they had either to allow England to use them as a tool, and be forced by her into declaring war against the Soviet Union, or else they had to admit the truth of Stalin's statement on the 18th Party Day, when he said that the English, French

and North American press "aim, without any clear reason, at provoking hatred against Germany in the Soviet Union". With reference to foreign policy, Stalin says: "We stand for peace and the consolidation of fruitful relations with other countries. This is our unalterable policy, and we shall keep to it so long as those countries maintain such relations with the Soviet Union, and so long as they do not try to damage the interests of our country."]

The Hitler Government deemed it expedient to establish peaceful relations with the Soviet Union, not only because support of the British plan would have made Germany an object of the British plan, a vassal of British imperialism, but also because the strength of the Red Army, the strong international position of the Soviet Union and the sympathy of the working masses of Germany for the Socialist Soviet Union, made this adventure appear hopeless. The ruling classes of Germany decided to adopt a new foreign policy.

*The German Government declared itself ready to establish peaceful relations with the Soviet Union, whilst the Anglo-French war bloc want war against the Soviet Union.* The people of the Soviet Union and the people of Germany desire a speedy end to the war in accordance with the interests of the working masses. [The Soviet people and the workers of Germany are against the spread of the war. The German working class wants an extensive trade alliance with the S.U. By means of peaceful trade with the S.U. and the other nations of East and South-East Europe, Germany can not only satisfy her needs for goods, but can also show that it is not lack of *Lebensraum* that is the cause of the poverty of the workers; and that it is not the imperialist oppression of other nations, but peace and friendly relations with them—and above all with the great Soviet nation—that the German people want. Many workers who wish for socialism welcome the pact all the more because it strengthens their friendship with the great land of socialism.]

Herr Hilferding now serves up the old Social-Democratic clap-trap that the Soviet-German Pact proves that the Bolshevik and the Fascist régimes are essentially the same. He is unable to perceive the simple fact that in *Germany* capitalism prevails, whilst in the *Soviet Union* capitalism has been destroyed by the great Socialist October revolution, and under the Stalinist Constitution *Socialist democracy* of the working people is being further developed. The Soviet Union has concluded agreements with the Government of capitalist Germany, as it has formerly done with other capitalist countries. The conclusion of a treaty between a capitalist government and the Soviet Union is therefore nothing new in itself. What *is new* is that the Soviet power, supported by the economic power of Socialist economy and the moral and political unity of the Soviet people, has gone over to an active policy in the fight for peace.

If Hilferding and the other one-time Social-Democratic leaders direct their war propaganda against the German-Soviet Pact, it is simply *because the British plan has the less chance of success, the more deeply the friendship between the German and Soviet people is rooted in the working masses*. Therefore not only the Communists but also many Social-Democratic and National-Socialist workers regard it as their task *not in any circumstances to permit a breach of the Pact*. [Those who intrigue against the friendship of the German and Soviet people are enemies of the German people, and are branded as accomplices of English imperialism. Among the German working class greater and greater efforts are being made to *expose* the followers of the Thyssen clique, who are the enemies of the Soviet-German Pact. *There have been many demands that these enemies shall be removed from their army and Government positions, and that their property shall be confiscated.*]

The fight of the German working people against the agents of British imperialism, against the Thyssen clique and their

friends among the Social-Democratic and Catholic leaders in Germany, in no way implies the formation of a bloc with the National-Socialist régime and toleration of the oppression of Austria and Czechoslovakia. On the contrary, this attitude demands a still more determined fight against all imperialistic strivings of the ruling circles in Germany. This imperialist policy finds its expression above all in the national oppression of the Austrian, Czech, Slovak and Polish people. Whereas the one-time Social-Democratic leaders do not give the slightest support to the fight of the nationally oppressed peoples, the Communists, and all progressive forces in Germany, are fighting *for full right of self-determination of these peoples. An energetic waging of this fight is a fundamental condition of the fight for peace and for the rights of the working people in Germany itself.* National oppression in so-called "Great Germany" is only grist to the mill of British imperialism, which seeks to conceal its real war aims behind the slogan of liberation of the Austrian and Czech people. [On the other hand the fact that the Czech people are so oppressed makes it more difficult for them to realise that English imperialism, and the accomplices of this imperialism in Czechoslovakia, have no other aim but to make the country a protectorate of England, in order to use it as a base from which to attack the Soviet Union. If they were not so oppressed the mass of the people in Austria and Czechoslovakia would fight with greater resolution to resist the English plan. The German people, and the other nations which are now under German rule, are faced with the problem of working, not with English capitalism for the spreading of the war and a new Versailles, but with the Soviet Union for peace, for national independence and for the friendship of the people. The working class, the peasants and the intellectual workers of Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, will become the strongest guarantee of the German-Soviet Pact and the hindrance of the English plan.]

Hilferding specially stresses that Germany is to be freed from reaction *as a result of the war*, that is to say, with the aid of British bayonets. He therefore demands of the British and French Governments that they achieve a speedy victory. [The German Communists and revolutionary workers, who even at the time of the Weimar republic were fighting against the strengthening of the reactionary capitalist forces in Germany, and who made the greatest sacrifices in the struggle against the National-Socialist régime of terror, regard it as criminal madness that some Social-Democrat and Catholic leaders should believe they can end this régime in Germany by means of a reactionary war—a war which means the destruction of millions of workers, immeasurable misery, greater than in the Thirty Years' War. This war policy is the more criminal because the Power which, according to Hilferding, will decide the outcome of the war, *is the most reactionary force in the world*. English imperialism gives another proof of its reactionary nature in so far as it refused the suggestion, made by Germany and supported by the Soviet Government, for the termination of the war. The English answer was to lead the offensive against the workers, to carry to greater lengths all previous anti-Soviet slander campaigns, and above all to organise the concentration of all the forces of reaction for war against the Soviet Union.]

*The fight for democratic liberties and the rule of the working people in Germany cannot be waged in alliance with British imperialism.* The working people of Germany are fighting heroically against oppression and exploitation by the present régime in Germany, because its terrorist rule does harm to the German people and discredits Germany, and because it thereby weakens the resisting power of the working people and helps reaction in Britain and France to deceive their own people regarding the true war aims of British imperialism.

*Hilferding's article, and also the declaration of the former*

Central Committee of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany against unity of action of the workers, indicate that the war and the new tasks arising from it confront the Social-Democratic workers in Germany with the decision: *either, together with the Communists, to set up the united front from below, to stand for the common fight for a people's front of the workers, peasants and intellectuals, for active friendship with the Socialist Soviet Union and to turn from the bellicose anti-Soviet reactionary Social-Democratic leaders, or to share responsibility for realising the predatory plans of British and French imperialism and the reactionary plans of German big capital.*

## APPENDIX II

### MESSAGE FROM THE INDEPENDENT SOCIALISTS OF GERMANY

THE FOLLOWING IS a message smuggled out from Germany by the underground "Independent Socialists" and published in the May Day issue of *The New Leader*:

In peace as in war we have remained political adversaries of the present German Government, bitter enemies of the Nazi régime. In peace as in war our work goes on. We fight in the trenches and in the farmyards, in the markets and in the munition factories. We spread our leaflets among workers and housewives, among peasants and intellectuals.

Hitler does not speak for the German people, Hitler is not Germany. When you hear of the fight on the war fronts, realise that there is still another fight in the centre of Germany. There is still another war—OUR WAR against the Nazi régime.

The German workers protest against the occupation of Scandinavia. The German workers oppose Hitler's war. This war is not our war, this fight is not our fight. We love our native country, but we hate Hitler's war.

At this moment, when the German wireless and the German press declare that Hitler has ordered the occupation of Scandinavia to protect the Nordic States, we declare openly before the world that we have nothing in common with such deeds.

If Hitler wants to use ruthless air warfare, we protest against the violation of human rights. We are ready to risk our lives by such protests against the Nazi war.

If Hitler wants to subjugate the small independent nations, we declare these nations to be natural allies in our fight against Hitler's war. As long as political democracies exist in the West, where, in spite of the capitalist system, liberty of speech, liberty of thought, the freedom of the Press are still preserved, all sections of the democratic German Opposition try to hinder Hitler from subjugating the workers there as he has subjugated us.

The oppressed races, the subjugated nations, the workers of all lands—these are our natural allies in our common fight.

The fight for the cause of Socialism in the citadel of reaction in the heart of Europe is not the cause of the German workers alone. When we fight against the Hitler régime in Germany, we defend the existence of civilisation, the progress of humanity.

*To-day we are few, the time will come when we are many. If they imprison us, the stones of their concentration camps will tell future generations of our sacrifices, of our fight. If they torture us, exile the best fighters, drive out of the country artists and scientists and ruin German culture for decades, they have not yet won the victory.*

If they kill some of us, our ideas will still conquer the world, Socialism will still live!

In this time of war, we realise clearly, in spite of all national antagonisms, the common fatherland remains humanity.

Long live the fight for Socialism and freedom in all lands  
—LONG LIVE HUMANITY!

[It must be assumed that the people who issued this magnificent battle-cry are among those of whose "exposure" by "the German working class" (including members of the Nazi Party) Ulbricht would not disapprove, provided that, as may be the case, they oppose the German-Soviet Pact.]



### APPENDIX III

## CROSS-EXAMINATIONS IN THE "DAILY WORKER" LIBEL CASE

**T**HE FOLLOWING EXTRACTS from cross-examinations in the case of Citrine and others against the *Daily Worker* are of interest:

Mr. Pritt: Have you brought before the I.F.T.U. the proposal that the united power of all the unions should be used to stop the war?

Sir Walter laughed for some seconds and then replied: "Excuse my levity, but how are we going to get the German trade unions to act against the war?"

Mr. Justice Stable: By stopping the war, do we mean getting one side to stop fighting and not the other, or both sides? Does it merely mean a cessation of resistance?

Mr. Pritt: I was deliberately putting it to the witness vaguely because I wanted him to say if there had been any kind of discussion.

*Daily Worker, May 2nd.*

Mr. Collard: Your article speaks of "bringing the British and French trade union machines behind the war". In your view what kind of war is the present one?—Definitely an imperialist war.

Mr. Justice Stable: What do you mean by that? The war is at the moment France and Britain on one side and Hitler and Germany on the other. It may be it is imperialist from Hitler's point of view, or from the British point of view.

Francis: This war is not something which is accidental, but it arises definitely from the system of society which we know as capitalism.

Such wars are inevitable while such a system remains, and therefore on the question of the present war we very soon came to the conclusion that it was an imperialist war, bearing the same characteristics as the last one, namely, a war between two imperialist Powers each trying to get domination over the other for expansion and spheres of influence for markets.

Therefore, I could not subscribe to the view that it is an anti-Fascist war because I found early in the war from contact with workers in industry that far from being an anti-Fascist war it is being used by the National Government and by the French Government itself to introduce repressive measures to take away the democracy of the industrial workers—the same democracy they say the two countries are fighting to defend.

I have no hesitation in saying it is an imperialist war in which the working class will be the one to suffer.

Mr. Justice Stable: I follow your view about the origin of the war, but I don't follow about the objects. I don't follow you when you say "it is not a war against Hitlerism".

Francis: It is a recognition of the fact that although this was the aim set out in the early days of the war, an aim to which the General Council of the T.U.C. subscribed, this is not the reason for the war, for if they were out to save democracy and smash fascism, they would not attempt to use in this country and in France measures that are akin to the measures in Germany itself. Therefore, I say it is an imperialist war waged by the imperial interests of Britain and France against the imperial interests of Germany.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sir William Jowitt: I gather you are opposed to this war?—Definitely.

Would you be opposed to any war under any circumstances in which this country took part, so long as this Government remained in power?—Yes.

Mr. Justice Stable: You mean not to keep up any resistance?—It depends on what kind of resistance and to what.

Mr. Justice Stable: Suppose a foreign army marched on London?—If there was an opposing army marching into this country to impose worse conditions on the working class, of course the people would have to resist.

Consider the French, with a land frontier with Germany, where it may be the Germans will endeavour to force a way through. Do you think the French workers ought to assist their Government to resist or not?—This is an imperialist war.

Mr. Justice Stable: That doesn't get me much further. I want to find what it means. Consider yourself giving advice to the French workers of to-day with German soldiers on the other side of that frontier. Would you advise the French workers to do everything to resist or not?—I should advise them to stop the war.

Mr. Justice Stable: But dealing with the situation concretely as it exists now, what would you say to those workers?—It is not a question of letting the Germans through. I must take my stand on the standpoint that the war is to the detriment of the British, French and German workers. It is not merely a question of hostilities.

Sir William Jowitt: Suppose yesterday you had been addressing workers at a French factory, would you have urged them to give of their best or to stop working?—I should not have done either. I should have explained, as I did at Hyde Park yesterday, about how wars began and how they could be stopped.

Asked again by the judge to say what he would advise trade unionists to do in specific terms—whether to fight on or to stop resisting, Francis said:—

“I would say, at their trade union conferences, that the workers shall discuss the implications of the war, arrive at a

policy against the war, and I visualise that if the Trades Union Congress, if it is held this year, takes a decision recognising it is an imperialist war and it is a war in which the workers stand to lose everything, then I cannot see the Government able to prosecute the war in face of this decision."

Sir William: Is the working class the only one to suffer in this war?—No. The middle class stands to lose the same as the working class, but there is one class that is not suffering and that is the class that is making profit out of the war.

Mr. Francis said it was not the policy of the Communist Party to advocate ca' canny methods or sabotage in the factory.

Sir William Jowitt: Does ending the war mean the ending the war by Hitler or ending by resistance to Hitler?—No, it means ending the war by the combined working classes of all countries.

The practical steps he would advocate to stop the war would be by getting the people to recognise the character of the war and by changing the Government. Mr. Francis agreed that at the beginning of the war he had taken the view that it was an anti-Fascist war.

A deeper analysis of the war, and his experience as an industrial correspondent had led him to change his opinion. It came to his knowledge soon after the war began that under cover of the war serious inroads were being made on the conditions of the working class and workshop conditions were being violated, particularly in the engineering industry.

*Daily Worker, May 3rd.*

Mr. Justice Stable: Until Hitler is persuaded to give up fighting us, the only possible way the war can end is for this country to submit; isn't that right?

Mr. Francis: No.

What alternative is there as long as Hitler and his armed forces are fighting us?—I think in Germany the war could

be brought to an end by the workers conducting a struggle on a single set of demands.

Are you capable of making the intellectual effort of basing your answer on the assumption on which the question rests? I want you to assume that Hitler and his armed forces are still fighting us. How can the war be stopped except by our ceasing to fight on our side?

I believe that this war can be brought to an end by the workers in Germany, in France and in this country gathering their forces together and using their organised strength to that end.

Do you realise that is not an answer to the question?

Mr. D. N. Pritt, K.C. (defending) : Your lordship may not accept it, but I want to submit that it is a complete answer.

“Very well, we will pass on,” the judge observed.

*Daily Herald, May 4th.*

#### APPENDIX IV

## MANIFESTO OF THE PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

A PEOPLE'S CONVENTION FOR A PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT

A CALL TO ALL WORKING MEN AND WOMEN; SOCIALISTS, TRADE UNIONISTS and CO-OPERATORS; PROFESSIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL WORKERS; SMALL SHOPKEEPERS, SMALL BUSINESS MEN AND FARMERS; DEMOCRATS AND ANTI-FASCISTS; IN SHORT, TO ALL WORKERS BY HAND AND BY BRAIN.

**I**N THESE EVENTFUL days the whole future of our people is being decided. The full horrors of war are let loose on the peoples of Britain, Germany and other countries, and millions are looking into the future with anxious concern. Our rulers have proved themselves bankrupt of constructive thought or action. The time has come for the people to unite in defence of their interests.

The present Government is a Government of the rich and the privileged, ruling the country in their own interests and against those of the masses of the people.

Behind it are the ruling class, the Tory machine, the men of Munich, the friends of Fascism, whose policy built up the power of Hitler, brought the nation into war, and is directly responsible for the unpreparedness which has sacrificed scores of thousands of lives.

\* \* \* \* \*

While the rich enjoy comfort and even luxury in safe shelters, this Government, with cynical disregard of the needs of the people, persistently neglects the most essential measures

of air-raid protection for the masses and makes no adequate provision for relieving and rehousing the victims of aerial bombardments.

It protects the most shameless war profiteering, and seeks to place all the burdens of the war on the backs of the masses of the people. Rising prices, crushing taxation, and food restrictions bear heavily on all sections of the people. Unemployment and short time in many industries accompany overtime and speed-up in others.

Small traders and farmers are brought to hardship and even ruin through the control of industry by "Big Business" and the extension of control in agriculture.

The Government refuses the just demand of the armed forces and their dependants for adequate pay and allowances.

It directs its attacks against our hardly-won democratic liberties, and our trade union rights, conditions, and practices, the only weapon we have for our long struggle against the ruling class and its system.

This same Government refuses the demand of the Indian people for national freedom, and will not recognise the freedom of all peoples, including colonial peoples, to determine their own destiny. Its attitude to the Soviet Union is one of scarcely-concealed hostility.

\* \* \* \* \*

This Government stands rooted in the profit system. It is dominated by the Tory machine. It represents those natural enemies of the mass of the people, the interests of big business and reaction. Such a Government can never defend the people.

*The interests of the people must override the interests of those who prey on the people.*

*This Government, which represents the interests of profits, must go.*

In this hour of crisis, threatened by limitless danger and

hardships, the people must make their will felt. The present Parliament, elected five years ago under entirely different conditions, is reactionary and unrepresentative. The formation of a coalition Government has wiped out the normal functioning of a Parliamentary Opposition.

The work of the Labour movement is paralysed because the leadership of the Labour Party is tied up with the Government, and in place of leading the opposition to it, shares the responsibility for the present evils. Vital issues, affecting the lives and deaths of millions, will continue to be decided in secret over the heads of the people, if the people do not make their will prevail.

*The people must unite in order to make their will felt.*

\* \* \* \* \*

As a step to the victory of the people's demands and the assertion of their power, their delegates must meet together in a Great People's Convention.

Following on conferences all over the country, and in accordance with the declared will of those conferences, we, the undersigned, representing the most varied sections of the people, have united to call a People's Convention to be held on January 12th, 1941, which will be at once the climax of months of preparatory work and the prelude of a further mighty campaign.

In accordance with the views expressed at the London Conference on July 7th, 1940, called by the Hammersmith Trades Council and Labour Party and a committee of leading trade union and Labour representatives, as well as at conferences and mass meetings in other parts of the country, we propose, as the basis on which the Convention is called and in preparation for the full platform which will be decided by the Convention, the following Six Points:—

- (1) *Defence of the people's living standards.*
- (2) *Defence of the people's democratic and trade union rights.*



(3) *Adequate air-raid precautions, deep bomb-proof shelters, rehousing and relief of victims.*

(4) *Friendship with the Soviet Union.*

(5) *A People's Government, truly representative of the whole people and able to inspire the confidence of the working people of the world.*

(6) *A people's peace that gets rid of the causes of war.*

\* \* \* \* \*

We call on all sections of the people in all parts of the country, to begin immediately to elect delegates for this People's Convention, to raise finances for the expenses of the delegates and of the Convention, and to set up organising committees for the Convention in all districts.

We call on all working-class organisations, trades councils, trade union branches, lodges, district committees and executives, co-operative and Labour organisations, women's organisations, workmen's clubs, tenants' associations, and unemployed organisations, to elect delegates.

We call on all progressive and democratic organisations, professional associations, small traders' and farmers' organisations, sport and youth movements, and educational and cultural organisations to elect delegates.

We call on all working people in the factories, mines, shops and offices, in every place of work, in every town and village, to meet to elect delegates.

The People's Convention must be the greatest landmark in the history of this country, and must lead the people from the present menacing situation to peace and freedom.

Let the people have confidence in their strength. They alone can save themselves, their country, and the world.

## APPENDIX V

### THE LEFT BOOK CLUB AND THE WAR

COMMUNISTS, having themselves made the *volte-face* of October 1939, now, sixteen months later, not merely commonly accuse the Left Book Club Selectors (Professor Laski, John Strachey and Victor Gollancz) of having made a *volte-face* by “*supporting*” the war, but appear really to believe it. For the sake of the record, therefore, it may be worth while to quote the following passages from Victor Gollancz’s Editorial for October 1938—written on September 22nd :

“I am writing this on the morning of Mr. Chamberlain’s second visit to Herr Hitler. When these words are read two and a half weeks hence we may be at war: or we may be awaiting war at any moment: or we may be living in a morally shattered world in which, terribly handicapped, it must be our main preoccupation to prevent that final onslaught of fascist aggression which would mean the end of civilisation. . . .

“The Left Book Club has had to meet a good deal of criticism—as we very well knew it would if it achieved success. It has been called a ‘communist organisation’ for no better reason than that Harry Pollitt has appeared on its platforms and that some of its books have been by Communists and Communist sympathisers, and in spite of the fact that of the three Selectors two are members not of the Communist but of the Labour Party, and that the third is a member of no party at all. Harry Pollitt has appeared on its platform, and

Communist books have been among its publications, for one reason only, so far as I am concerned: for the reason that, during the period that the Club has been in existence, the Communist Party has shown complete understanding of the fascist and particularly of the Hitler menace, and superb energy in its attempts to awaken the public to their peril. . . .

“If it is war before these lines appear, or if it is to be war in the immediate future, the duty of the Club is clear. First, it must keep steadily before the public mind the real meaning and nature of fascism: it must explain by patient exposition and analysis just what would be implied by a fascist domination of the world. Secondly, for that very reason it must support all measures genuinely making for the greatest efficiency and most complete determination in the carrying through of the conflict. Thirdly, this would be a war in which there would be many mixed motives—anti-fascist democrats would be fighting, and rightly fighting (and I intend to say this, for all the sneers of the Leftists) in the same ranks as anti-democratic imperialists. It would be for us to see to it that the war is and remains an anti-fascist war, and neither on the one hand compromises with fascism from imperialist motives, nor on the other turns an anti-fascist struggle into an imperialist fight *à l’outrance*. Fourthly, we should see to it that there were no trace of the wrong sort of war feeling—nothing but sympathy with and compassion for the peoples of the fascist countries, who would be in an even more desperate plight than ourselves. Fifthly, the war must be finished at the right time and on the right terms, and the curse of another Versailles be an impossibility. And, finally, we must exercise the utmost vigilance to see to it that a war against the fascist bloc is not made the opportunity for introducing fascism here.”

The position of the Left Book Club Selectors is today pre-

cisely the position taken up in that Editorial. The "Leftists" referred to were the I.L.P.ers, etc., who asserted that if war came it would be an imperialist war which must be opposed. The C.P. castigated all such people as most dangerous and wrong-headed "Trotskyists".

